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ST. HELIOS

*"I tell thee Love is Nature's second sun,
Causing a spring of virtues where he shines."*

By Anna Robeson Burr:

THE GREAT HOUSE IN THE PARK

THE HOUSE ON CHARLES STREET

THE HOUSE ON SMITH SQUARE

ST. HELIOS

By

ANNA ROBESON BURR

Author of

*The Great House in the Park, The House on Charles
Street and The House on Smith Square*



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ST. HELIOS

BOOK ONE

ST. HELIOS

CHAPTER I

"A LETTER, sir, from Mr. Traquair!"

The voice making this announcement was impressed with its importance, and the respectful tones were tinged with gratification. Yet so strong was the habit of routine in Mr. Waghorn's old butler and friend, that he took his master's hat and gloves and helped him off with his coat and muffler, before producing the envelope which bore, in unbecoming scarlet, the distinguished profile of General Washington. Being the type of feudal retainer that he was, he knew something of the friendship from which the letter sprang, and which had so marked an influence on the history of the elderly gentleman who now carried it off to his study.

To anyone familiar with London life during the last forty years, the firm headed by Mr. Decimus Waghorn will not be unremembered. Yet beyond the fact that his Christian name bore witness to the industry of a Victorian mother, little was known about this influential solicitor. He came from the North, he prospered and was powerful in his generation, and he retired just before the War, to take his place among the ranks of those agreeable, elderly bachelors whose presence makes London the best company in the world.

Since the War, he lived alone in a yellowish house on the edge of Regent's Park, so near that he almost felt a sense of ownership in that imitation countryside; and every morning at eleven o'clock he walked to Marylebone by the path beside the lake. His habit was to spend the day at his Club, returning toward tea-time in a taxi-cab to his house, where, unless dining out, which he did very frequently, he passed a satisfactory evening in his library. The fact of this very comfortable existence led most people to infer that the old gentleman had done well for himself professionally, and this was true, although it had not come about quite in the usual way. Many years ago he had made the acquaintance, while travelling in the United States, of an exceedingly astute Pennsylvania lawyer, by the name of James Traquair. The two men became fast friends—a friendship which tranquilly survived the strain of modern life and years of separation. Mr. Traquair, at their meeting, was making his way, as the phrase is, in a country where there are many ways to make, and by his advice Mr. Waghorn had invested his savings to great and growing advantage. It was hardly surprising, that to the old manservant, "the mail from the States" as he called it, should have aroused such an interest, since he associated it with a recollection of truly magnificent tips. In late years, the letters had not been very personal, for Mr. James Traquair had an absorbing family, as well as a large corporation practice, so that a letter in his own splashy handwriting had come to be something of an event. Therefore Balland lingered on the particular April morning in 1920 with which we are concerned, until Mr. Waghorn had glanced the contents through and turned to him

with an expression which might almost have been termed animated.

"Mr. Traquair's son is landing today in England" he announced immediately. Of course he must dine here. Will you get word to Brown's Hotel at once?"

Then, as the man hurried off, the solicitor sat down to re-read his friend's communication.

Like all Englishmen of his type, Mr. Waghorn set his main emphasis upon privacy and his mansion contained nothing so communicative as a telephone. A note must be despatched giving young Mr. Traquair no sort of excuse for failing to appear that evening at the table of his family's old friend. The favorable answer was promptly received and, as dinner time approached. Mr. Waghorn began to feel conscious of a growing curiosity regarding the errand which had brought his friend's son to England. He reflected that in all their years of intimacy he had never known Mr. James Traquair to handle other than routine English business, of the kind easily arranged by correspondence. Mr. Traquair's own visits, which at one time had been regular events in both their lives, had always been those of pleasure and were usually companioned by a wife and a couple of pretty daughters. The sons had been left behind at camp or college, and, rather to the Englishman's surprise, he found his friends regarded European travel as somehow unsuited to the leisure of their boys, as a diversion properly to be won after years of hard work. Mr. Waghorn recalled an elder son, now married and settled somewhere near Boston, and a younger who had returned from France to his father's office. As this errand was a legal one, the lawyer unconsciously looked for a mature person.

Denis Traquair turned out (as Americans so often do!) to be much younger than had been expected. Not only younger but gayer, more animated When he appeared, a little late and very apologetic (remembering his father's warning about English promptness), he was seen as a tall, active fellow not yet turned thirty, whose ready smile showed admirable teeth and whose eyes were quick, clear and intelligent. If not exactly handsome—for his face was thin, his moustache worn long and his features more sensitive than regular—yet he was decidedly personable, even picturesque. There was a dash of the d'Artagnan in his ready and fluent responsiveness. His manner had that easy good-humor which is so deceptive in his race—for the Briton doesn't expect firmness where there is geniality, and is apt to connect strength of will with grouchiness. Young Mr. Traquair was by no means as easy-going as he looked and could be as obstinate as any mule that ever balked; he was quite a shrewd person and observant too, and he had so far managed his affairs with a determination which made small allowance for impulse or emotion. In fact he struck one (as his countrymen often did) as a little too cool and looking upon everything as too possible to his zealous intelligence. Denis Traquair was keenly interested in life and couldn't have been more self-confident than he was without being dull, which he certainly wasn't in the least.

Everything that met his eye now interested and amused him; the house, his welcome and his host. His father's descriptions somehow caused him to look for an elderly fossil with a crusty manner, someone to be managed, and Denis managed older men, he felt, rather well. Instead, he beheld a mild, small man, with blinking eyes and an air so bland as to be almost affectionate.

If Mr. Waghorn had a mouth as noncommittal as a slit in a letter-box, yet he was assuredly both kind and friendly. Moreover, the flavor of preciseness given by his dress and manner was not without value in the younger man's eyes.

They went in to dine, in a room with a fine Adams mantel and some old glass and silver which, the guest felt dimly, was of importance. He found himself gayly talking while his host blinked and listened, dropping a "Quite so—quite!" at encouraging intervals. The American had expected to find him a repository of quasi-legal anecdote, but sundry leads in that direction were disregarded in favor of direct questions concerning his parents' health and habits. These took some explaining, it seemed. To Traquair, nothing was more natural than that his father should acknowledge his age and talk of retirement; therefore he was surprised that it should surprise Mr. Waghorn.

"Why, he's a man in his prime—he has the advantage of me by several years, I believe?" the solicitor commented, pursing his mouth and shaking his head, as if at a weakness. "I have often observed," he added, "that you wear out faster than we do!"—a remark that gave Denis a little jog of candour.

Meanwhile the stranger's bright and sympathetic glances pleased his host, who had expected the modern affectation of extreme indifference. If the house had seemed to Denis unexpectedly large and impressive for one person, the dinner struck him as wonderfully careful and delicious for two. He was "as hungry as a hawk!" he observed, half apologetically, while acknowledging that he couldn't keep up with his host when it came to the wines. "We lack the training, you see,

sir, on our side—we're behind you in that"—Denis apologized, waving aside Balland and the decanter.

Coffee was served in the library, over a fire which the April chill made very grateful, and Denis looked about him with renewed satisfaction. It was as comfortable as home and he could say no more than that! A background of books enfolded them: the young man had inherited a nice perception of legal atmosphere and was fitted to appreciate the old friends in the book-cases, thin folios of early reports, legal antiquities in pie-crust tinted bindings and the beautiful Blackstone in 18th century tooling and inlaid labels It was all so pleasant and he kept savoring the taste, while he answered Mr. Waghorn's question as to whether he knew London well.

"Not at all, sir. Paris—yes—but not London. It seems a more romantic city than Paris somehow."

The comment gratified the Londoner.

"Just so I hold with you there London is the most romantic city in the world."

"I like mystery," the young man observed and summoned before his mind Regent's Park in the bluish spring twilight.

Meanwhile there had been no mention at all of the business which had brought Mr. Traquair to England, and, as he continued to talk of Paris and the War, his host began to feel somewhat at a loss. In Mr. Waghorn's experience, Americans were never slow to speak of what was in their minds,—as they put it, they generally wasted no time in getting down to business. Therefore he gazed not a little intently at this conversational young stranger, who sat well back in his big chair, his hands deep in the pockets of his dinner jacket while he wagged a narrow foot thoughtfully at the fire.

It was evident that he was waiting for Mr. Waghorn to open the subject, although his answer to the first question displayed no touch of hesitation.

"It's simple enough in one way," he replied, "though not in another. There's a man here I want to have a talk with on a matter—and I don't want to have that talk with his solicitor."

"That's not so simple," Mr. Waghorn said, "because, as you know, it is not our custom. But it all depends on who the man is. Do I know him?"

"I don't know if you do," answered the young man, "but I guess you know *of* him anyway. His name"—here he drew a memorandum from his pocket to glance at—"his name is Ian Thomas Kellynch, Viscount Heriot."

At this Mr. Waghorn appeared to be very much surprised.

"Heriot and St. Helier's!" he ejaculated. "Can it be possible?"

"Then Heriot and St. Helier's, as one would say," the other asked, "Saye and Sele or Bath and Wells?"

"Precisely!" assented Mr. Waghorn. "But, my dear young friend, if I may ask—what do you with Heriot and St. Helier's?"

"The name sort of gets you, doesn't it?" the young man said. "It surprises you—it's unexpected. Now why is that? Is he such a tremendous swell—is he so awfully important—this Lord Heriot?"

"It depends—and if he is, it's hardly that," the lawyer admitted courteously, "which surprises me. No: there's another reason—I'll come to it later. I don't think Heriot has been in the States for many years?"

He looked, he spoke interrogatively, while Denis finished his coffee and accepted another cigarette.

"Well, I've come to tell you about it," he meditatively began, as preface to the narrative he was mentally arranging. "I have to go back a little When you visited father, sir, did he ever take you into that part of the State where he was born?"

Mr. Waghorn shook his head. He had, he believed, passed through Pennsylvania in a train—"an immense empire," he remembered, "superb views; big cities; vast, grim stretches of coal and iron lands."

"Father's people," Denis told him, "were Scotch. They went up the State and settled before the Revolution. My mother's people were French." He paused.

"Scots and French—that accounts for the flavor of the mousquetaire," the older man was thinking.

"Such wonderful country," Denis cried enthusiastically: "high, rolling hills, running up to four thousand feet and covered with rhododendron thickets and oak forests. Father enlarged the house, which overlooks the gorge and the stream at the bottom of it. Grandfather's father named that stream the Silverwater. There's no town near. Father owns the head of the Silverwater Valley. We were kept there while children, it's all so beautiful you see—we're quite crazy about it."

It was plain that his mind dwelt on a beloved landscape, a stream, a valley planted with corn that tossed its tassels in the breeze, a house with windows shining in the sun. Then he looked across at his waiting host with a charming smile, the first suggestion of unreason

"I don't know if you've ever felt like that about any place?" he asked, "maybe you wouldn't understand—?"

"Oh I understand very well," the Englishman said kindly; and Denis resumed his narrative, speaking quickly and with freedom.

"What I'm giving you now is just an outline. The maps and so on are at the hotel if you want to see them Very well, then. The gorge runs for more than five miles. We own the head of it and part of one side, a steep, wooded tract. All the other side and the lower gorge on both banks of the stream belong to a chap named Graham. He's just a farmer, a cranky individual, who lives in a tumble-down house in the valley which he doesn't even paint—yet he always seems to have money to buy land. Slowly, by parcels here and there, he's bought all the lower hills till he commands the valley and the pool which the stream has made at the outlet of the gorge. Now and again we've tried to get him to sell—but he never will. It's always been a puzzle as to how he raises the cash to hold on. Last year, about a mile and a half beyond his tract, they opened the new State motor road and I needn't tell you what a tremendous thing it would be for us to connect with that road. The advantages would be simply incalculable; it would open up the country and bring the better sort of people there. No one could imagine refusing to co-operate in something so obviously for everybody's good—yet not only did Graham refuse permission to cross his land but he told me he was starting in to build a new house, enclose the whole tract in a fence to keep everybody out and dam the stream to make a lake!"

"A miser then,—such plans are costly."

"Immensely costly. Father couldn't believe the letter. If true, it was awfully serious for us and worse for the folk in the lower valley. To steal the Silver-water and put fences up—why, it's un-American, that's what it is!"

"Quite so," agreed Mr. Waghorn, gravely sympathetic.

"As I say, father couldn't believe it—didn't believe it, until he saw the workmen arrive for the new house. He tried to talk to Graham, but got nothing out of him. Then he set to work in another way and so the truth came out."

"The farmer, of course, was an agent," commented Mr. Waghorn.

"Of course 'Twas a complicated enquiry, for Graham was close-mouthed enough. It seems hard to believe that for years he's been buying up the land for this Lord Heriot and St. Helier's. And by the way," Denis asked, suddenly struck with a memory, "it isn't *he*, by any chance, who wrote 'The Soldier Songs' Yes?" as the other nodded, "Well! Know them? I loved 'em. We all did. That's funny now, isn't it?"

"I agree it seems certainly odd," the elder man responded. "There must be reasons of course and I shall have to think them out. Heriot must own over twenty thousand acres at Whins and Trampen Park. I wonder now ?" He paused to gaze meditatively at the fire and Denis did not interrupt him.

"You haven't told me why you desire to make this a personal matter and not a professional one—why you wish a personal interview?" he asked, by and by.

"Well—Is he your client, by any chance?" Denis enquired.

"No," said Mr. Waghorn: "I have the honor of his acquaintance and in the past I came into contact with him professionally on two occasions, one of which, he was good enough to think, placed him under an obliga-

tion to me. But you can speak freely; I no longer represent him."

"Then," the American proceeded, though plainly by no means sure of his ground. "It's this way You see, father reads a lot of histories and biographies and he has always had his own ideas about English people. One is that you can talk with them better than write, because they're so frank. He's heard a few things about this Lord Heriot—who is a picturesque old bird, now, isn't he? Dad says that after all it's a personal affair, and why should Heriot know we're any different from Graham? If he knew how we feel about the country, Dad thinks he'd understand."

"James was always a shrewd judge of character," admitted the elder man, though no doubt he winced a little at the term his friend had applied to a peer of the realm.

"We don't want to drift into a legal squabble," Denis insisted, "and that's what it must come to, unless Lord Heriot sees, as we feel he must, that in reality our interests lie together. So far as Graham knows, Lord Heriot bought this tract for no other reason than that he wants it. Now that's extraordinary enough—why should he want it? What's he going to do with it—he can't be going to live there, can he?"

"I never heard that Heriot was expecting to leave England," was Mr. Waghorn's answer.

"Graham doesn't know—but it's his daily bread to do as he's told. Father thinks that Heriot has no more reason than we have to want isolation, that he'll benefit as we shall by a good motor-road. We ought to talk it over friendly-wise. If I see his solicitor—oh, well, you know," Denis avowed, getting up and standing on the hearth-rug, "what these legal gentry are! Co-

operation, that's what we want. I'd like a good talk with this Lord Heriot. Why not?" He looked down on his host from his eager height and confidence. "Is he so formidable?" he asked gaily.

Mr. Waghorn was some time in answering this smiling question. He had felt like replying that the mere easy informality of the proposed method was too contrary to English habit to be successful, that co-operation was the last thing in the world quickly obtainable in the United Kingdom. If he said neither of these things, it was because young Traquair possessed a certain charm which one felt, and which alone might serve to contradict these assertions. His silence also sprang from memories, strange and puzzling if not painful, and the light his guest's story had cast upon another piece of gossip he had recently been hearing. Suppose Heriot was really going to marry Lady Champyon after all these years? Suppose——. He filled his own glass, after his guest had by a gesture refused more, drank, and then spoke.

"I'm afraid I shall have to become rather early Victorian," the old lawyer said, half-whimsically. "Heriot is still a striking figure: if that is to be formidable, then he's formidable indeed. I'll tell you what is known of him and then you shall be the judge—you won't mind a little 19th century domestic gossip?"

"Fire away—I shall love it!" Denis promptly assured him and took his seat again. It was like him to notice that his host said "what is known" but not "what I know;" and he remembered it later to his own advantage.

There were some books lying at Mr. Waghorn's elbow. He selected one, put on his spectacles and consulted its pages before beginning to speak.

"As I thought," he read out slowly, 'Ivan Thomas Kellynch born in 1851: just so! P.C., K.P., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., O.M., etc., etc. H'm..m Succeeded in 1892 Lord in Waiting and Master of the Buckhounds Special missions—Teheran 1890: Madrid 1895: Washington 1898—exactly! Poems: Childe Harold's Return 1872: Sonnets and English Lays 1890: Soldier Songs 1915: For the Funeral of Rupert Brooke 1918. Prose: Persian Sketches; A History of the Foreign Office'—I recall that," said Mr. Waghorn, looking over his glasses at his attentive guest; "a very witty book too witty for the subject, most of us thought. And of course, the famous 'Letters to the English in War-time'—how that did inspire us, —we all felt it! Well, does that give you some sort of an idea?"

"It interests me, but it hasn't scared me off yet," said the young man; "and I want to hear all you have to tell me about this alphabetical gentleman."

"I remember very well," Mr. Waghorn began, "when I first saw Ian Kellynch—long before he succeeded 'Twas at Lord's—one June—and very wonderful he seemed. That was an era of handsome men. The Dandies, too, were not forgotten. There were traditions still of Byron and d'Orsay, and Dizzy had been a gorgeous figure Young Kellynch surpassed them all—a sort of Sun-god. At that time there was no certainty of his getting the title and his people weren't rich. They sent him to Oxford, where he promised great things; though he got sent down for some prank—nothing out of the way, but he's always been too sensitive and he wouldn't go back. His uncle—who lived in Paris—was fond of him and had him there during much of his boyhood The Second

Empire may be said to have been his nursery—and I cannot say it was a good one He wasn't seventeen when he went to a luncheon chez la Païva and beheld the mysterious duc de Morny in talk with the mysterious hostess His verses came out when he was only twenty-one. They were charming indeed,—of course many of us read them because they were *his*—and after that he went into the Diplomatic Service. In society everywhere he was made much of, for his good looks, his talents; but money was scanty enough. Many an heiress was dangled at him, but in vain. He travelled; one heard of his adventures: I remember a tale of how he helped to fight in his pajamas for twenty-four hideous hours, a mutiny of Chinese sailors in the Yellow Sea, and finally won out by turning on them a hose full of steam from the ship's boilers! Yes, he was no weakling in those days; he enjoyed life—lord!" ejaculated the old man, "how Heriot enjoyed life and a world that smiled at him! And he never seemed to grow coarse and selfish, he kept his freshness and he shrugged everything displeasing aside. He was so facile, so brilliant, and things came so easily that he never worked at anything He drifted along—Secretary here and there, Vienna, Stockholm, and so on; and then he succeeded to the title, to twenty thousand acres, and to over half a million pounds!"

Denis whistled. "That was nice," he commented, "and what did the Sun-god do then?"

"That's what they called him for years," the narrator said, nodding. "They wrote 'St. Helios' under his cartoon in *Vanity Fair* Does all this bore you?"

"On the contrary," replied the young man gravely, "I adore to hear about these gilded scions of an effete

aristocracy. It's making me dreadfully envious—please spare me nothing! What did old Turveydrop do?"

Mr. Waghorn blinked at these frivolities, but reminded himself of trans-Atlantic irreverence.

"For awhile he continued in various Foreign Office by-paths; he was sent as special envoy to one or two governments. Then came his chance, a special mission to Washington, with the understanding that if he were well received it would lead to the Ambassadorship. We were anxious to have the right person in that post, as it had grown to be one of great importance. Well, over that business Heriot made his big mistake. You see, he didn't in the least understand the Americans."

"You mean he refused to go to such a poor little one-horse, official village?"

"Oh, he went!" said the narrator dryly, "but he took the Nicoletta along with him."

"Was she a yacht or a Derby winner?" Denis enquired.

"She was a dancer—French, I believe."

"And Ellis Island let them in! How our morals have improved since then!" the American murmured, then, observing that his smiles did not, for some reason, appeal to his host, he became grave again and turned serious grey eyes on the speaker. "I guess it made a great to-do."

"They had to recall him," Mr. Waghorn sadly asserted. "There was no help for it Now, it seemed a stupid thing for Heriot to have done, but you see he was mad about the woman He'd taken her everywhere with him. How could he have guessed that Washington would regard her presence as an insult?"

"Morbidly sensitive place, Washington—everybody

knows—sort of antechamber to Paradise itself. Unreasonable no doubt—however—!”

“Heriot was recalled, and, when he returned to England, he came alone. Something had happened; what, nobody really knows. La Nicoletta accepted an engagement to dance in Russia. Years later she died—in Buenos Aires, I believe. The experience was a hard one for Heriot. It altered him, they say. He went back to Persia and stayed out of England a long time. Then the War came and he came back to help, and help he did. There were his verses—do you remember the one about—

‘Black nights and bitter days,

And all the horror of our war-torn ways’?

That little book was in everybody’s hands, it seemed to express everybody’s feelings. Those verses brought Heriot back.”

“I think it’s rather splendid, you know,” Denis quickly avowed.

“Just so: It *was* splendid and what he did during those years can never be forgotten. He gave his money, his time and his pen to War Service. He spent himself: no man did more, gave more. Yes, he stands high today, does Heriot, before the English people.”

“You have your own theory about the lady?” Denis asked, for Mr. Waghorn paused seeming inclined to sink into revery.

“Yes. You see, just before she sailed for Washington,” he confessed, “I had a visit—here in this room, from Madame Nicoletta. She wouldn’t come to Lincoln’s Inn Fields—swore that an office frightened her. So—rather to the danger of my reputation,” said the old man quaintly, “I saw her here in my house.”

"And was she very handsome?" Denis asked politely. "What was she like?"

"Much as she was on the stage, if I remember. A pale witch of a woman, slim and small-breasted, with eyes like lamps and hair shining like black satin. She had that intensity—that childish simplicity they have, you know She's gone with the rest. "Où est Flore la belle Romaine, Archipiada ni Thais?" He was pleased with the quotation and repeated it a thought dreamily. Denis, sympathetic, kept still "She's dead. There's no reason I shouldn't speak of our talk. She came about her children—a boy and a girl. Fool that she was and Heriot was, they were taking 'em along Their future had begun to trouble her. Her husband was still living and she wanted to divorce him: she thought Heriot would marry her and legitimize the boy so that he would inherit. Poor soul, of course it couldn't be done. I had to tell her and I was sorry. But anyone could see she worshipped Heriot, and if she left him in America, it was for his own sake. Illiterate, passionate, devout and devoted, extravagant, selfish and self-sacrificing—that was La Nicoletta when I talked to her. I can see her now: her pointed hand, her diamonds, her tears. Poor thing! Poor thing!"

His tone held such genuine compassion that his hearer, whose background was less tolerant, whose attitude had been edged by recollection of the gross brutalities of war, looked at him curiously. "What an impression the creature made on the old boy!" was his thought, while aloud what he said was: "It must have been during his American visit then, that he bought that first tract in the Silverwater valley?"

"Just so. We've been dwelling on matters possibly aside from the main point, and yet, I think, not wholly,

If you wish to talk to Heriot—mind, my lad, I don't say that it'll do any good!—you ought to know the man."

"Well, nothing you've said so far makes me scared of him," the American rejoined, with crisp self-confidence. "The kind of person you describe will be more sensitive to my point of view. I never dreamed it was the man who wrote those songs And I'll be careful—oh, I shan't make myself disagreeable," Denis promised. "Is he the sort that hates business or only when it's so labelled? I can talk poetry to him, you know, if necessary—I love it."

Mr. Waghorn pressed his finger-tips together and over them found himself considering his guest with mixed feelings. Surely, Denis had learned from the bright lexicon of youth, other lessons than that it contained no such word as "fail." Or was it that he was clever—a dangerous word to the English mind? The more young Mr. Traquair showed signs of being clever, the more cautious old Mr. Waghorn became.

"The first thing you'll have to find out is why he bought the land," he remarked a trifle coldly. "So far there's nothing to show you *that*—nothing."

"But I guess you know why," said Denis simply, "and of course you'll be right."

Mr. Waghorn could really do nothing but smile at this piece of impudence. He felt like a robin with salt on its tail, or like a hare which has incautiously ventured too near the fluting of Pan's magic pipe. With a chuckle, he allowed that he did have a theory, but that he wasn't going to share it with his guest tonight.

"Anyway, I'm not afraid," the American repeated, rising as if all were settled. "If you'll give me a letter to him, I'll go there tomorrow."

"Fair and softly, my young friend," said the other,

aghast at this precipitancy. "You may be able to escape Heriot's solicitor, Mr. Marrindon, but you can't possibly hope to escape his secretary. They say he does nothing nowadays without her advice."

"And is she young and pretty, this secretary?"

"She's young, I believe," the lawyer admitted reluctantly, "and of considerable personal attraction People say—well, you can guess what they would say!"

"On our side they'd say he was too old for anything but a trained nurse," was Denis's comment, and its brutal assumption marked his generation to his companion's mind. But he answered patiently: "Here we don't feel so However! If you wish to succeed with Heriot, you have no choice—."

"I must reach him through this charmer's influence? Who is she? Another French lady?"

"I never heard," Mr. Waghorn explained, "anything about her except her domination. She appeared in Berkeley Square two years ago, and today her influence is paramount. They say she's hand in glove with the heir, Tom Kellynch, a chap I don't fancy. I have to be telling you this because you'll hear it everywhere. Unhappily, it's being much talked of Heriot's dislike of business has given this woman her hold; she's a clever adventuress they say. So you see, you have to be patient a little," he added, noting the cloud on Traquair's face.

"It's not a job I like," said Denis, showing distaste. "Still, you ought to know the ropes—It doesn't seem very professional, now does it?"

"As to that, there's always the solicitor, you know," said the crafty lawyer, walking beside him to the door. "Wait a few days and let me see what I can do for you And now we'll ring for Balland and have him call you a cab."

CHAPTER II

"Somehow he commands an atmosphere; he has a spacious manner; and he has kept up all through life such a volume of racket about his personality that somehow, he imposes!"

STANDING upon Lord Heriot's doorstep a week later, Traquair was still conscious that a veil of distaste had fallen across the bright face of the errand which he had undertaken with such gayety and goodwill. It promised to be so very different from what he had anticipated! The truth was that the young lawyer had been decidedly overworked since his entry into his father's office after demobilization early in 1919. For this reason, they had been willing that he should undertake a task involving a sea-voyage and probable further diversions. Denis, too, had manifested much love of and familiarity with the Silverwater Valley, and Denis was supposed, not without reason, to get on well with strangers. The affair had worn, therefore, much of the aspect of holiday; his spirits had been high and he was sorry to find them slacken.

For Mr. Waghorn had indeed been right when he said that Lord Heriot's affairs were talked of. The letters Denis presented brought him quickly into touch with other acquaintances of his father's and, although he was most discreet, yet he couldn't help hearing a good many things, all of which depressed him. The story, from the angles of many versions, seemed to his

mind both ugly and pitiful. A man of distinction, who had outlived his group, now fallen into the power of a calculating and determined harpy, and too deeply ensnared by the weakness of the flesh to shake off that unworthy domination—this was the picture presented, and it was a markedly unpleasant composition. True, the persons who told it to him did not know Heriot except by sight—few had ever laid eyes on the heroine of the scandal. She was described in their talk as under eighteen and as over forty-five; as dark and as blonde; as a cultivated Aspasia and as an ignorant and illiterate peasant; while her nationality varied from Spanish and Italian to French and American. These tales, whether true or false, simply made Traquair increasingly doubtful of his own ability to understand and to convince such exotic personalities. They were, as he put it, quite outside of his beat and he was content they should remain so. The matter was made difficult and unsavory, while all his dreams of meeting and impressing some charming elderly Englishman—representing him later, perchance, to the advantage of both in the Silverwater Valley—vanished at once. He was too old to believe in them and too young to cherish them any longer. The feeling which especially marked him for an outlander was that all this didn't add to his curiosity or heighten his interest—it made him a little sick and not a little sad.

His appointment, arranged by a punctilious interchange of letters, was for three o'clock, but it became plain that a wish to be exact had brought him a few moments ahead of time. Ushered into a room beside the front door, Denis found himself in surroundings of mellow richness, in a place which was evidently no woman's, if not to his mind wholly a man's. There

were tapestries and carved cassone, there were cabinets with delicate Chinese porcelain; there were many jars filled with spring flowers. Through a doorway leading into an antechamber, he beheld a typewriter, a desk, filing cases and a few of the appurtenances of an office. Here, then, must be the lair of the typist—the lurking place of the redoubtable secretary. He glanced therein but it was empty

So great an effect had his disappointment on the young man's mind, that he had determined to disregard Mr. Waghorn's instructions by asking to see either Lord Heriot *or* his secretary. Chance rewarded this impulse in an unexpected manner. Denis had not been long alone in that strangely decorative apartment with its blue and gold, its books and bibelots, before the front door opened to another arrival and he could hear a deep and unusual man's voice being respectfully answered in the hall. Another moment and the master of the house stood in the doorway.

Notwithstanding Mr. Waghorn's description, Traquair was unprepared for a figure which must have been superb in youth and was still a drawing in the grand manner. An immense man had entered—well on to six feet five in height, with curved and tufted eyebrows, grizzled curls, a haughty nose, and a red-lipped mouth that drooped in the middle, like that in the portraits of the Duke of Wellington. The eyes in their deep sockets were large and blue and still fiery; the broad shoulders and long, erect shape held almost intact the firm outlines of youth. The face was spirited: only that full mouth—"like the mouth of a baby learning to whistle"—gave an effect at variance with the luminous eyes, added naiveté to worldliness, sensuousness to

intellect. The man was evidently complex; he was not all of a piece.

This apparition was the more startling, being clothed in a frock-coat and trousers of pale grey, while the grey tie, folded like a stock under the round chin, was background to a sumptuous pearl, whose size and sheen accented the general effect, and because it held in one hand an article which the American could no more have imagined himself wearing in the street than a Turkish fez—namely, a shining, pearl-grey top hat, with a lighter band and a curly brim!

Somehow the size of the man and his physical magnificence, the artless way the grey hair curled upon his brow, his big, beringed hand, the challenge, the severity of his glance—these for an instant took the breath and Traquair could not think of anything to say. He could only look: and who knows what service that sudden attentive pause did him in Heriot's eyes? But if so, there was nothing in that striking face to show any welcome; on the contrary, Lord Heriot's manner was abrupt and blunt, the manner, in fact, of a man who has been forced into patience against his will.

"So?" he said, "you are the American young man, are you, that old Decimus has been wantin' me to see about my property in Pennsylvani-a?" (He gave their full value to the syllables). "You've had your journey for your pains, I fear. I'm not thinkin' of sellin', and I've an agent there, a very decent chap named Graham, who has authority from me to settle any details that may be necess'ry, don't you see? Therefore, as I've a very full day, p'raps you'll take up anything else with my solicitor, Mr. Marrindon."

The finality of these words took additional weight from a personality accustomed to be obeyed, and only

the imminent peril of Traquair's errand caused him to speak out.

"But there's no question of asking you to sell," he replied, in a dismayed voice, taking a step nearer. "If it were that or any other business, I should not have troubled you personally, sir. On the contrary, we've been delighted and—and—honored, to feel you were to be our neighbor. A poet on the Silverwater—why, it's just what we have always wished."

There was a warm accent of sincerity in this speech which caused Heriot to ask, in spite of himself: "Do you come from that region? It was a pretty place. I've not seen it for years."

"I was born there, sir. And it is glorious country, although the valley where your tract lies is quite undeveloped. But I cannot imagine who can have misinformed you about my errand—surely, not Mr. Wag-horn? It was when we learned *who* owned that tract, that my father—whose land marches with yours, sir, on the west—" (Denis had spent his week learning the language!) "felt that as we were the largest owners in the Valley we ought to talk over some of the problems together—informally, for the good of the country. That's all, sir."

"Thought you Yankees never came anywhere except after the dollars?" was Heriot's comment, but Denis was determined not be annoyed.

"Not all of us, sir. You see, the Valley happens to be our home—we love it. My grandfather's father cut the first trail through the gorge nearly seventy-five years ago—that's a long time in the States, Lord Heriot. We were first there. I think you know how it is if you've been a long time on the land and new people are coming in? It's a new country, constantly

changing. I think, if our positions were reversed, you'd have run across to have a talk with us; now wouldn't you?"

Heriot's underlip twitched. The "Sir" in this speech, the "new people"—(Heriot and St. Helier's as a new person!) the assumption of equality—these were piquant to him.

"You seem to be a very vehement young man!" was his observation, but it was amused rather than hostile and Denis drew breath.

"Honestly, sir, I've no wish or intention of boring you," he answered, subduing his voice as much as his feelings would let him. "Of course, I'll talk to your solicitor if you'd rather—only, he's probably never been there and you have. And you must love it or you wouldn't have bought. In England you always seem to be so attached to your country-places?"

The note he struck was just the right one; the subtle flattery of his impressed manner, his direct simplicity, his appeal to the Englishman's strongest instinct—no, in all his life, Denis had never done better. He realized it when he saw the other's face relax, when there glowed on him the full smile of that gaze—but he did not grasp the extent of his triumph as shown in Heriot's next series of questions:

"You must be Scottish?"

"Originally we were, I believe, before we settled in Pennsylvania."

"Whereabouts, then? The Traquairs are Peebles folk."

"I think the family came from Interleithen, sir."

"H'm. . . .m!" Heriot considered this information, while he stroked the pearl-grey hat-brim with the tip of a careful forefinger. "Quite so. We Scots under-

stand the hill country—'tis true enough. I see: you and I will be having a little talk over your gorge; that is, if I can find the time. Meanwhile, you may give my secretary an idea of what it's all about." He looked around, an absence seemed to strike him; he rang and the footman appeared.

"Where's Miss Grant?" (or so it sounded in Denis's unaccustomed ears.)

"Miss Grant has not returned from her lunch, my lord."

My lord's face drew into heavy lines.

"How came my secretary to go out to luncheon? Was luncheon not served here?" he demanded abruptly; and the servant appeared to be alarmed and faltered in his answer

"Seeing as you was out, my lord, cook and Mr. Clayton thought——"

"Send Clayton to me."

The servant hastened to obey, and in a few moments there entered the room a man of Heriot's own age and nearly as tall—a pontifical person, who awaited notice with the utmost dignity. On him his master turned with pursed lips and outraged, uplifted eyebrows

"I find, Clayton, that my secretary has been given no lunch—that she has been forced to get her lunch elsewhere and therefore that she is absent when I need her services This must not occur again."

"Very well, my lord Miss Grant is just coming in now, my lord."

"Ask her to step in here. That will do."

The man departed, bearing with him his master's hat and gloves, which he carried much as if they were sacred objects in a votive procession. The American, to whom the interchange had the effect of a scene on

the stage, waited with interest to see what was about to happen. Conscious of the unfamiliarity of these details, he yet owned to a sense of having recovered them from books they had all the reality of fiction.

There was a stir in the hall and light footfalls moved hither and yon in the room with the typewriter. Heriot turned toward the inner doorway a smile that was gentle and gratified. "Oh, there you are," he called, in quite a different voice. "Come in!"

The secretary obeyed. She stood, framed by the curtain-folds and turned from the elder man to the younger a glance of steady enquiry. Heriot met her eye.

"I've been informed that they offered you no lunch," said he; "lazy swine—'tis an outrage!"

"It didn't matter in the least. I was very glad of the walk."

The voice was not foreign; neither was it English; the speaker's age was not forty-five, neither was it eighteen. A slim, pale, composed, plainly dressed woman of about twenty-five—this was all Traquair could be sure of; he kept looking at Heriot and not the newcomer, because he did not wish to stare.

"This is Mr. Denis Traquair from the States,—from the State of Pennsylvania," was Heriot's introduction. "He's lunchin' with me here day after tomorrow," (Denis gasped,) "and meanwhile I wish he should talk over all the tiresome end with you. Make an appointment with him and hear what he's got to say. Afterwards you can tell me anything that isn't *business*—." He pronounced this word with an air of faint disgust and then the smile came back into his handsome face. "You'll find him a very eloquent young man," he

drawled and his eyes twinkled; "he describes his country as a veritable land of Beu-lah!"

For once Denis was nonplussed. His acceptance of the invitation was halting and far from poised, the color came up into his thin cheeks from surprise and pleasure. Heriot, who had yielded as usual to whim, merely brushed his words aside and thereupon left the room, *en grand seigneur*. His exit, as his entrance, left Denis speechless

They could hear his rotund voice speaking to someone then a door closed silence. St. Helios yes, he was well named! After he left it the room did "fade into the light of common day."

"Will this hour tomorrow suit you?" The secretary was speaking. She had an engagement book and was turning the pages, with her grave air. But Traquair did not look at it nor at her.

"But he's *wonderful*!" he ejaculated, beginning to walk up and down, hands thrust into pockets, his absorbed gaze still following in imagination the vanished figure. "He's—beyond! Do you have more of 'em like that over here?"

"I do not think that there is anyone, anywhere, in the least like Lord Heriot."

"There couldn't be! And after all, he's asked me to *lunch*! Good Lord!" said Denis and continued to walk up and down.

"Then shall we say tomorrow at three?" The voice—and it was not an English voice—recalled him to the secretary, who had not moved. He could no longer avoid looking at her although still he didn't stare. He noticed that her hair was curly, abundant, and very black; that her eyes were dark, brilliant and strange.

She dressed and spoke, (which was additionally depressing to the young man,) like a lady. The hands holding the engagement book were fine and finished; one of them wore an old-fashioned ring. Her manner, while polite, was distant

No: he'd be shot if he'd give his confidence in such a quarter, if he'd talk over his affairs with this girl, whose presence cast a shade over the hero-worship with which he was already inclining to regard his host. He was no puritan; he hoped he was man of the world enough to take any situation as he found it where it was no affair of *his*—a fellow wasn't likely to be surprised at anything after the War—and Denis mentally raised his eyebrows at the mere idea! Moreover, the meeting had undoubtedly done away with the ugliest and the most sordid inference that one drew in any story involving Youth with Age, because Heriot's attractiveness was in itself a justification, even at his years. But all the same he, Denis, wasn't going to play up to the secretary—he *wasn't*, that was all. It was too jarring, no matter what Mr. Waghorn said His reluctance sprang, no doubt, partly from the charm which Heriot had exercised over him, partly also from the fact that the woman, who stood waiting patiently, was not the type of person he had been led to expect. He resented the whole thing

"Oh, thank you, but I really think there is no need at all to bother you," this impulse made him answer, while he walked toward the door. "Lord Heriot thinks it more formidable than it is, you know. The main question is merely to get his permission to build a mile of roadway—I'll bring my maps when I come to luncheon and I promise I shan't bore him. I wouldn't for the world." He bowed and moved away.

“Mr. Traquair!”

The accent was so intense that Denis, stupefied, turned to meet a gaze more intense still. The look leaped like a flame out of her pale face: he stopped, startled

“Will you—*please*, come tomorrow at three? Not about his lordships’ business”——he saw her swallow and moisten her lips——“but about my own. And when you come, be sure to ask,” she added, speaking with pointed emphasis, “for Miss Gran-net.”

CHAPTER III

*"Parthenophil is lost and I would see him;
For he is like to something I remember
A great while since, a long, long time ago."*

A STREET ORGAN in Berkeley Square was playing "O sole mio" Denis Traquair floundered down the steps and turned mechanically westward into a soft spring afternoon with watery clouds gathering and faint sky showing between them and silvery, late sunshine. There was no wind. He walked straight forward, straight on, out Hill Street to Deanery Street and thence to Stanhope Gate where the three paths meet. People sat about on green chairs, but he didn't see them. Taking the right-hand path, he came to the Serpentine and followed the edge away across the open common, till he came to Kensington Gardens. He walked on and on until he was tired and then sat down on a bench near the Round Pond. The margin was all aflutter with children, running around it, calling to each other while they sailed their boats. Once a little Pekinese scampered up and sniffed curiously about his legs; but he remained absorbed, he remained under a shock. He was thinking, struggling to reconstruct, to piece together, to remember—. Those strange, pitiful eyes rose before him—how, when, where, had he seen them before? That look of challenge, of entreaty—what did it repeat for him? At first, it was all a chaos and jumble; for Denis, like many another man

of his generation, was separated from his youth by the gigantic cleavage of War, which had forced him overnight to maturity and utterly broken the continuity of his life. He had been, as it were, suddenly jerked from the normal course of things; this new order of travel and camp and personal danger seemed to have cast him loose from all that had ever happened. And what happened had filled the sunshiny stretch of an energetic American boyhood, in those days when life had been so incredibly easy,—so strangely free! Denis had been the cleverest of the four young Traquairs, and they had never made him pay for it, as families so often do. They had good health and good tempers, and were exceedingly absorbed in their own affairs. He could look back on parents whose sympathy made him perhaps over-confident; on the companionship of a solid, sober elder brother, slower than the junior, but useful to have near when that junior's quickness got him into hot water; on a pair of pretty sisters, sensible and popular; on holiday trips, school prizes and later honors; on the pleasant promise of rising fast in a congenial profession. All these ordinary things, now so much rarer than they used to be. . . . Before the War—why, before the War seemed as nothing—just a dream—a childish dream of home, of athletics, of tramps in the Silverwater Valley, of brothers and sisters and parents and plans. All so peaceful and prosperous—so fat and secure! No wonder the days and nights of horror and strain and fierce activity made these dreams seem as if they belonged to another person. Now, however, turning his memory back to pierce the past—here and there objects began to stand revealed; as, when a fog hangs over the Alps, one sees mere fragments at first,—here a pine tree, or a cow

apparently grazing in the sky—or a chalet, even—until the wreaths blow away and all the scene is clear. So, for Denis, sitting and apparently gazing at the Round Pond, the machinery of memory began to revolve and its pictures of ten years ago to glide across his inner vision

The Round Pond was no longer a pond; it stretched out about him and beyond him into a sheet of silver-black water, smooth and still, an August sea. The row-boat moved idly over this still sea floor and from its oars dripped festoons of blue-green fire forming a long wake, like an *Aurora Borealis* imprisoned in the heart of the ocean. The young man who propelled this boat was about twenty—Denis supposed it was himself, but indeed they seemed strangers to each other—and he was gazing here and there with joy in the soft night and in the novelty and beauty of his surroundings. This was his first visit to the Maine coast—to the island where his cousins had taken a summer cottage—and he, who was hill-bred, rejoiced in his first experience of life by the sea. On the sheet of black water, breathing now of pine, now of salt, in which every bubble broke into a cool phosphorescent flame, he rested as though it were the sky and he were rowing through the Milky Way Behind the cup-shaped harbor was an outline of rock shore—Scrag Island it was called—whence gleamed many points of light, some quivering upon the water. Beyond lay other rocky islands. On the horizon a beam flashed and passed and flashed again, regular and cheering, to light the Western Way. Across the north he knew to lie, unseen, the lovely silhouette of Mount Desert—that Happy Isle of pleasure, which sits and smiles above the breaking surf.

Although it was but ten o'clock, yet the cove was

empty of human presence; no voice sounded; no one stirred among the fishing-boats. There was only one sign in view that human beings were awake: perhaps for that reason Denis unconsciously rowed, though slowly, in the direction of a large steam yacht, glittering in a necklace of many lights and swinging at anchor just within the harbor. This was the second night the "Angélique" had anchored there, and, although he found himself moving towards her, it was not because the sight gave him pleasure. The "Angélique" gave pleasure to none of Denis's sort upon that coast; indeed it was murmured that, notwithstanding her name, she was more a diabolic than an angelic visitant. Coarse-faced men, reddened rather from alcohol than sunburn, had made their appearance from her launch into cleanly and sober little white villages among the islands, to be welcomed only by the shopkeepers or by the men who were then engaged in breaking the prohibition laws of Maine, as later on they were to engage in breaking the prohibition laws of the nation. One or two village girls had been invited on board; unsavory incidents had followed. Lurid tales of gambling and drink and worse hung about the "Angélique," like the cloud of gulls that flapped and darted about her stern, and, as the music of a victrola jiggled out over the water, Denis looked at the brilliantly lighted object with active dislike. Youth in romantic mood prefers the breathing and silent water to the evidence that only man is vile. He leant upon his oars to study the flashes of phosphorescence.

A sudden strong puff from the sea drew across the harbor and swung his boat around—perhaps the tide was turning? She swayed and dipped: then all was smooth again, only that out of the stillness young

Denis became aware of a new sound—that of something struggling, beating the water between himself and the ship. So unmistakeable a sound, so inarticulate and yet suggestive of desperate peril, ceasing for a few seconds only to break out again nearer him and weaker than before, that Denis must find out what caused that dreadful splashing. Quickly and powerfully, he swung the boat's bow round and there was sweat on his forehead. A few strokes brought him upon it—he had seen something—in his excitement he gave a cry—and then found himself on his knees grappling with a cold, inert, streaming mass which he was trying to lift Even now he felt that chill of horror, the struggle with that dead weight, the fear of upsetting his boat

Instinct turned him toward the yacht for help; but the tide was now running strongly in shore; during the struggle they had drifted farther away, and, when at length what he had rescued lay at his feet, Denis had no thought but to reach the cottage-wharf. He had never rowed in any college race as he rowed that night

Not for some hours did he learn whose life it was he had saved. The strain of that wild pull to shore and hurry to the house to give the alarm; the arousing of his cousins; the getting hot water, blankets, brandy—all these vitally important acts and the speed with which they must be accomplished, absorbed his mind and concentrated it. What they worked to save, in that limp heap on the kitchen floor, was just an anonymous young life—personality was absent from it—and when Denis saw that he had been in time, for the heart was beating and breath returning, only then did he recall hearing Edith say it was the child from across the bay—the girl they called Nick Grannet. Nor did the information

seem of any importance compared to the fact that he was released and free to stagger off to bed. He was dead tired. While for many nights after, his dreams were of splashing and suffocating and struggling, or of hurry, hurry, hurry, through the dark, bearing some monstrous freight without a name

Even the next morning amid all the fuss, Denis wasn't much excited over the thin child with big eyes, who faltered out shy thanks, which he as awkwardly received. After all, a man in his junior year couldn't be expected to feel interested in a school girl almost five years younger. He was rather gruff about it and secretly wished it had been the beautiful Miss Fairleigh, who was at least twenty-five and ran her own motor-boat. What a pity it should have been this less than nobody, this reckless tomboy who was out in her canoe when she ought to have been in bed! Besides, no one in the colony at all fancied the people she was staying with; they were more than impossible. The woman who came to take the child home, paid Edith a call which was painful for that kind and charming young lady. She was effusive and she was autobiographical; her hair was too blonde, her speech too familiar, her nails too shiny. She wasn't even, it seemed, particularly kind dwelling on the fact that the girl was no relation but merely kept to please a friend; that she hadn't a cent and they were fed up with the charge of her. And she called Edith "my dear!" Mrs. Traquair was not surprised that the small, pale face didn't lighten when she came into the room. Only monosyllables issued from the tight lips: so that Edith came downstairs and confided to her husband that this poor little thing seemed so indifferent about everything, one wondered if per-

haps—perhaps, she had not tried to take her own life? They would never know, Edith supposed, but it wasn't natural for sixteen to look like that.

John Traquair poohpoohed the suspicion, but his wife shook her graceful head. More than once in friendly-wise she had questioned Nick and always received the same answers. A desire to watch the phosphorescence had caused her to take out her canoe, some careless movement in a puff of wind had upset it. Denis himself told John how calm the sea had been: and when he let fall that all this had happened near to the "Angélique," Edith and John had exchanged looks—looks which they hastened to explain of course, in quite orthodox terms. They didn't wish Denis to share what they had heard about the "Angélique," nor have his triumph lessened by suspicions which, after all, were purely gratuitous. Only—had the child been out to the yacht? If not, why her constrained and listless manner? Who was she? and what lay back of it? It was all too disagreeable for words, and Edith was distinctly relieved when the girl went home and when the harbor was empty of the yacht's presence. Oddly enough, they were to read in the newspapers later, the sudden termination of her cruise, caused by the suicide of one of her guests. Even to their peaceful island home the story came and bore all the satisfactory emphasis of retribution.

Such, in fine, was the history of that August night, and, so far at least as Edith and her husband were concerned, there it ended. Edith did remark to John that it was lucky the rescued girl was so plain—these young things were apt to be romantic and they wanted no sentimental complications for their clever Denis. Much to her surprise, John didn't think the girl so plain, "or

at least," he qualified "she won't be some day. Don't you see those splendid eyes?"

With these observations, the incident closed for them, as it would hardly have done had they dreamed that for Denis himself it was not closed at all. His further encounter with the child he saved came about in this wise. He took a great fancy to sketch that summer and carried his color box and easel to a particular rocky point where the Atlantic surges hammered the cliffs with spray. There, one afternoon later in the month he came upon the girl herself, in her worn black dress hanging so ungracefully on her thin body. She lay curled up on the edge of a rock-pool, watching the sea-weeds and limpets and mauve and cream sea-anemones waving their tendrils in the splashing tide. It was one of those days of strong sun and humming wind, to which everything responded as a violin responds to the player. The pines sang in it and the beach-grass bent and rustled. The breakers rolling in added their voices, and across the cove came the flapping and cracking of a sail-boat coming up into the wind. An intense indigo band circumscribed their world and isolated it from the dim mainland.

As Denis drew near and said, "Why, hello!" the girl gathered her wet dress about her and sat up, replying by a stiff, shy bow. Her face became crimson with pleasure, but the look soon vanished, because the meeting made her keenly conscious of her untidy appearance, her ragged hair. She remembered Mrs. Traquair's beautifully fresh, simple summer frock and delicate appointments, and a sort of despair flowed over her that she owned nothing like them. She wanted to run away, but she wanted also to stay and the latter impulse prevailed She pushed her black hair

out of her eyes and sat by the edge of the rock-pool, keeping her shoes well out of sight under her dress, to watch Denis put up his easel and set to work with an enthusiasm which the result on canvas hardly justified. He seemed the acme of easy poise and artistic mastery; and she was far too deeply impressed by his shining good-humor to guess that Denis was playing a game with himself rather than seriously practising the art of painting, and that the easel, the palette and paints, the brushes, the open collar and the absorbed manner, were all stage accessories for his own enjoyment Himself as actor played to himself as audience, and no doubt the effect of the scene was heightened by the forlorn and awe-stricken figure, so interested a hero-worshipper.

"I hope you are all right by now?" he asked her with elderly kindness, and added: "What did you say your name was? I can't call you *Miss*—after the other night, can I?"

"No no!" she said and her expression brightened. "My name is Nicole—it sounds like Molière, doesn't it?"

"Do you read Molière?" Denis asked surprised, and she nodded.

"I read everything; I love reading But of course they call me Nick—old Nick sometimes!" and she flashed a smile at him for the first time.

"How old are you?" the boy pursued.

"I was sixteen last June."

"Do you come here every summer?"

"No, I hope," she cried with vehemence, "that I shall *never* see the hole again!"

He looked at her in amazement. Her face once more became clouded and gloomy; it troubled him. After

all, he had some interest in a life he had saved So, protesting as to the delights of island life to which she only shook her head, he started talking in a friendly, boyish fashion, and from talk to questions—not too direct or insistent—as to her life and history

That first day vouchsafed little information; but next afternoon he found her seated there on a round boulder, awaiting him. She remembered months afterwards, with a sick humiliation, how she had tried to press out the black dress—which was her only day dress that summer—and donned her best collar, and how she had longed to add a bright ribbon, but did not dare. It was doubtful if Denis had noticed anything: she was just a scrawny, shabby schoolgirl, not deserving of attention from a great man like himself. However, he was a kind and feeling lad and his interest had been roused They met daily for a week, and their talks were the means of opening Denis's eyes to possibilities of unhappiness such as he had never dreamed. Poor little Nick Grannet was simply the loneliest young creature he had ever encountered or imagined. Somehow, if you were an American boy or girl, you took for granted a certain secure, established background as a setting to life. There was bound to be, one felt, a father who went to work and a mother who stayed at home to look after you; good, filling meals three times a day; clothes, such as others of your age and kind wore; school, in one of those huge buildings with many windows, and the opportunity of college afterwards. One took all this for granted if one were Denis's sort; never had he remotely contemplated a life containing not one—not a single one—of these essential things. Nick described a childhood dragged about after a wandering mother, with too brief inter-

vals' of convents and too long ones of being boarded out with strangers: sometimes being paid for and sometimes being owed for; sometimes in one place, sometimes in another She told of being neglected, not wanted, of belonging nowhere in particular and always being in somebody's way. She told of longings for study which were sneered at, of love of reading which must be concealed like a crime. She knew almost nothing, she avowed, and could look for no further education; she was to be apprenticed, they said, to a milliner in the fall, because her mother had left nothing but debts And she told all this in English which was oddly pure and free from cheap slang, but which burned with resentment, revolt and bitterness that seemed mature and terrible.

Much in this story, Denis failed to understand. He knew that ambitious youth can get a chance if it applies in the proper quarter, and he knew that law as well as public opinion existed to force selfish guardians to provide such a chance. But this child belonged to a nomad class which is the hardest for such laws to reach; and the deeper reason underlying her own unwillingness to seek outside aid, he was too immature to guess. How should he know that public schools and paternal regulations were apt to ask inconvenient questions?

"You *hate* to trim hats?"

"Well, wouldn't *you*?"

"I just can't see—" he stormed, moved by her predicament. "Haven't you *any* relations at all? Everybody has somebody! Your mother—hadn't she any brothers or sisters?"

"I never heard of any."

"Then your father didn't he have any peo-

ple? Think! There may be letters or papers with some name and address. Have you ever tried?"

She closed her lips and shook her head.

"Everybody has somebody!" Denis insisted

The tide was rising. As he spoke, a wave flopped over the rock nearest them, casting down a bunch of golden-brown rock-weed. The girl Nicole persistently kept her eyes thereon, watching until a wave came that sucked it again into the depths Then she turned her gaze significantly back to his and Denis knew that he was answered. She looked so thin, and so painfully old, old with suffering! Dimly he groped for a key and failed to find it. There came into his mind a memory of the Greek play he had read, with its sense of pursuing, unrelenting Nemesis And she was making no effort, no struggle—she was being swept down Youthfully, he revolted.

"But you oughtn't to give up trying—it's morbid! One may be adrift awhile and strike root later, you know—lots of people have—" he assured her and he felt she listened.

On the following afternoon when she joined him, he saw she held a package of letters.

"I've been thinking—" she began, as one who struggles against reluctance, "—about—about the chance my father might help me."

"Why, is he alive?" cried Denis, surprised.

She gave him such a look, so bitterly wise

"Oh, he's alive, I believe," she stated quietly. "He left my mother when I was a baby I didn't *want* to ask him anything—but maybe I ought—I don't know him. I don't remember him These are some of his letters—perhaps you wouldn't mind telling me what you think?"

There was boundless trust in her manner, and young Denis felt the importance of this confidence That she should rely on his judgment seemed perfectly natural: his glance, as he took the letters, was meant to be that of a man of the world, kind and firm

"We'll have a look at 'em," he murmured. Nick moved away from him and, sitting in a grassy hollow, began to break off bits of sedge-grass and bluebells. Silence fell in the sunshine save where a gull called above their heads

There were seven letters and by the time he reached the second, young Denis felt they were burning his fingers through the paper: his heart thumped; his face crimsoned; he dared not lift his eyes. There were things in them—he underwent a ghastly feeling of staring at something sacred, something not meant for him or his like. He became suddenly aware of his own shallow, untouched youth with its awkward inhibitions; in front of these vivid words his confidence slipped away and left him naked to this wind of emotion

The letters were those of a man in horrible suffering, whose mistress had abandoned him and whose physical craving gives him no rest, although his worldly sense supported her act. They were full of humiliation and despair and charged throughout with a passion that struck across the reader's mind like lightning across the sky. They were a picture of life's reality, such as Denis loathed to see—one that left him miserable with shame Not till long afterwards did he recall their detail, the fine handwriting on heavy paper, the style, noteworthy and individual, the rich, the terrible vocabulary Three of the letters were signed "*Aucassin*"—in the others the signature had been

torn away. He did remember, too, that they had been written from different places and that the last was from London. Was it the Berkeley Square address? He could not be sure Even now, after ten years and sitting in that unfamiliar place, certain of the phrases came back to him and again burned in his mind here and there, like sparks of fire.

At twenty, self-command is quickly unseated and not again easily mounted in the saddle. Young Traquair's memory of his own behavior that afternoon had been unpleasant for a long time afterwards and even now was distasteful. His chief desire had been one of escape. The effect made by these letters had quite overshadowed the figure of the girl who had given them to him, or the personal problem that they involved. In the reaction on himself he quite forgot what they must mean to *her*. He recalled bundling them together again, with a flushing face, bringing out some generality about being unable to advise her, and beating a hasty retreat. He had not turned back, but he was perfectly aware that she stood there looking after him, the letters in her hand. Her young figure—clothed in black and painfully still—there it stood and looked as the boy hastened away And ever since it seemed to have been standing there, dark and helpless, while he was still hurrying away

"Ask for Miss Gran-net."

Not Grant—just their gobbling way of talking Yet how could he ever have guessed? A piece of sea-weed, tossed up on a rock, sucked down again

Stiffly, disjointedly, Denis turned his mind from the scenes long past to the present with its implications Parrot-wise, he could only repeat to himself

the one extraordinary fact "Ask for Miss Gran-net—Nicole Grannet—Nick Grannet!"

Then, suddenly, he became aware that there was silence around him, that the children, their nursemaids and dogs had all gone home, that his coat was wet and the Round Pond had become a circle crisped and patterned by the falling rain.

CHAPTER IV

“MISS GRANNET will see you, sir.”

This time, Traquair was not ushered into the large and stately reception room where he had waited before, but was conducted down a passage into a smaller one at the back of the house. The windows of this little chamber, which had an intimate air, gave on a space of garden, that later in the season would show flowers as well as green shrubs. Meanwhile, these blossomed within; bowls of Chinese lilies and narcissus, tall jars of daffodils, lent a spring-time grace to the room. Books filled the alcoves on either side of the hearth; the walls displayed a number of Persian miniatures whose coloring was both soft and brilliant. There were comfortable chairs about, but the visitor would have none of them; he remained standing in the middle of the rug.

Traquair had slept brokenly that night, and his dreams had repeated a forgotten scene with all its uneasiness and peril. Once again he strained gasping at the oars, striving to carry home a formless freight—and this time the nightmare had an additional terror of pursuit—something pursued by Something—hurrying, hurrying out of the darkness He had awakened, only to walk again the treadmill of bewilderment and conjecture This most unsettling encounter quite threw him off his balance; he felt both uneasy and excited.

She entered. Yes, his head had been full of her, so that the Bond Street errands for his sister and the tailor for himself had seemed illusory by comparison, so disturbed was he; and now he was to be disturbed again. This was neither an unhappy child, nor a strained young woman; this was yet another incarnation, and not one calculated to make him any easier in his mind. The lady who greeted him with so formal a poise was not the type to be associated with incidents of an emotional nature. This time he observed her closely. Her face was one of clear pallor, not painted, yet artificial—he couldn't say exactly how One felt that under other circumstances vividness would have been its main characteristic, but this was now quenched, if it had ever been lighted. The face showed as a small, square mask, with a mouth habitually closed in a line of extreme reserve, and eye-holes through which dark fire flashed, inimical and dangerous. The curl of the hair, the carriage of the head, the curve of the brows—these were strikingly like Heriot Anxiously, Denis looked for the childish, confiding gaze and awkwardness he remembered: they were absent.

Absurd—that he should be disconcerted by the richness of her dress—jarred by its fashionable lines When she turned her head, he noted the earrings of Spanish gold and intricate design which completed the impression of ultra-sophistication. There was nothing about her to recall the past—and Traquair, waiting, so to speak, for his cue, was conscious that she stood much, much further off from him than the width of ten important years This was a stranger; as her first words showed.

"So good of you to come, particularly as you had completely forgotten

"I had forgotten—but you are not surprised, surely? Ten years have changed a child,"—he paused, and Nicole waited with her faint smile, for an obvious compliment; but, instead, he merely finished his sentence: "into a young woman."

The absence of the expected compliment annoyed her; then she was annoyed at herself for noticing it. She dropped her lids. Denis asked quietly.

"Do you mind telling me—now that I am here—just how it all happened?"

He was looking coolly at her Surely, he was very different from the patronizing boy whose embarrassed parting glance she could not even now remember without fury The cruelty of it as if life had not been sufficiently cruel! And now this young man showed no constraint, although a certain coldness. Nicole as utterly mistook the cause as she had mistaken the cause for the boy's hasty retreat of ten years back; she was accustomed to relate everything to her own situation Today, her wary glance observed the firm chin, the mastery of a direct gaze, the good-humored, indifferent mouth but of the indignation that shook her she was careful to show no trace. She *detested* Americans—this was her thought—but she was a match for any of the race, when there was an end to gain. Sweetly, she answered him:

"Naturally, I don't mind—didn't you save my life? But—do sit down there's a comfortable chair, and will you smoke?"

"Thank you, I don't care to smoke."

He took the chair in a deliberate way, not looking at her; he could not have been more professional.

"Then you won't mind if I have a cigarette?"

The atmosphere was unfamiliar to Traquair; he simply waited. This artificial dauntlessness in her puzzled him; to his view, the situation between them demanded frankness Wasn't he the one person, after all, who knew that she was not an adventuress, in the sense, at least that everyone else took her to be? However, perhaps her narrative would clear the air

"You want to hear how I managed it. It was simple enough. Of course, your suggestion bore fruit I began to think out things practically for myself Men have such clear minds!"

"I wasn't a man," Traquair answered simply, "I was a mere boy, barely twenty at the time."

"You seemed a great man to me" She paused for a response to her flattery, but he remained silent, and his nod to her to proceed was in the nature of a command. She freshly disliked him, but she obeyed:

"I did have one friend in New York, who had been my teacher at school the winter before. I went to her and she helped me She's dead now and she was the only friend I ever had. She managed everything, so I joined her: we sailed together that September. I just ran away. No: I never heard what those people thought—the ones I had lived with, I mean. Probably they felt a good bit relieved. You see, they expected money with me from Maman; and, when she died, they were disappointed. They let me feel it too—oh, they were horrible people" She laughed a little, a laugh that he disliked to hear.

"Well, we got to London and that was about all. Poor old Wylie's little bit of savings had paid for the trip, but of course I didn't have a penny There was no time to be lost, so I came to this house at once. I took the letters you saw and added one of my own in which I told Lord Heriot that my mother was dead, and I gave them in and said I would wait for an answer I shan't forget that afternoon in a hurry. It was rainy; my clothes were old and thin and the wet made me so cold I kept on shivering. Clayton was furious because I hadn't rung the servants' bell. To punish my impudence, I suppose, he let me stand in that stone passage out of the area, from two o'clock till seven . . I didn't dare go away, I just stood and stood I'd been far too excited that day to eat, and every time I heard a step I wondered if I was to be thrown into the street At last I was sent for and taken up to the library The door opened, he stood there I believe old Mr. Cust was in the room too, but I didn't see him: I could see nothing but—Lord Heriot—he was so big: he towered above me and his face was whiter than mine. He said:

"Did you bring me these letters? Who are you?"

And I answered: "I am Nicole."

Then my legs gave way and I don't remember anything much except hearing a voice say, "Get the brandy" I had had a hard day

"That night they sent me back to old Wylie in a taxi She was in a dreadful state. She had refused to come with me because she said it was a private matter and my father might resent her interference. She was shrewd, for I presented a more pathetic and appealing figure by myself."

Miss Grannet paused to relight her cigarette, but

her companion did not appear disposed to comment on the level progress of her narrative, so she resumed :

"The poor old dear was frightened to death alone in those grimy lodgings and by the state in which I returned. The following day appeared Mr. Marrindon. He's the solicitor, the one you don't want to see. He's a very pompous and self-important person, and the interview was the most comical you can imagine."

Once more she paused to glance at her auditor, but his face remained unchanged by any suggestion of humor. Nick tilted her cigarette into the air and pulled at it :

"He asked questions and cross-examined us till I was sick with weariness He kept repeating in an injured voice. 'Nothing could be more improper than all this I was myself responsible at the time for seeing that his Lordship made ample provision for Madame Nicoletta—most generous provision!'

"Finally I up and said that perhaps he *had*; but that was years ago and Maman always spent money like a drunken sailor! That kept him quiet awhile, tapping his eyeglasses against his teeth. He was particularly outraged because I had gone to Berkeley Square instead of to his office, and he repeated, annoyed : 'Surely, even in the States, you know what a solicitor is?' When I told him, truthfully enough, I thought it was a person who kept trying to get orders over the telephone, he said : 'God bless my soul : ' and 'Can it be possible?' over and over again, as if dumfounded.

"Then old Wylie whirled in, with her flat voice and her gold teeth and eye-glasses : 'It's this Sir Heriot is her father, isn't he? You aren't in the least her father,

are you? Then why on earth should she have gone to you?"

"They were fearfully funny together, because Miss Wylie spoke of Marrindon's illustrious patron just as if he were the Wicked Nobleman of fiction; and, as she said, she hadn't for over twenty years taught in a New York Public School for nothing. 'I know more about wickedness,' said she, shaking her forefinger that had a ring on it, 'than you are ever likely to have forgotten!'

"Then she'd get his style wrong too, every time and Marrindon would pick her up patiently and say: 'Viscounts, madam, are not called *Sir*. My client is The Lord Heriot.'

"Wylie got the better of him; her tongue was always quick: 'Well, *you* can talk of him as if he were The Lord, but I shan't!' I'll do Mr. Marrindon the justice to say that he always spoke well of her notwithstanding. He saw what she was.

"The upshot of this and following interviews was that Wylie insisted on their sending a doctor to look me over and he scared them quite a good deal. Things were on the edge of being bad, it seems. They kept me in bed awhile and poured milk and eggs into me and then they shipped us both to Bournemouth, to very sunny, nice lodgings; and there we stayed for three years. That was a good time. I grew well and strong and had all the teachers I asked for and we were let alone. Wylie wouldn't leave me: they were glad to pay her to take care of me. She stayed on until she died suddenly, just before the war. After that, as I wanted to go to France, I was sent over there to school in the spring of 1914. I worked hard and I loved it. My allowance came regularly from Mr. Marrindon, but

Lord Heriot I had never seen again since that day. Well, the War came and I turned in to do work in one of the War Bureaux. That's the sort of job I like, you stand for what you are. I stayed until 1917 and one day my father turned up on a visit there He worked hard, too, you know. Of course I knew him and he knew me, but we pretended to be strangers He asked my name; he condescended, in his magnificent way, to praise my work. I kept quiet, I saw he was watching me To cut my story short, he took one of his whims and had me transferred to a Bureau in London, and some time afterwards he engaged me to act as his secretary, and here I've been ever since"

She ceased. Her auditor maintained a considering silence, and with an expression which baffled Nicole as she had hardly expected to be baffled. The truth was that there were elements in the narrative—heightened, rather than diminished, by the steely lightness of its tone and the genuine vividness, even humor, with which it was told—elements which Traquair found incredible. To one of his standards of life, it was well nigh incomprehensible So he said nothing at all, and Nicole crushed the fragments of her cigarette into an ash-tray and clashed the gold earrings by a quick turn of her head.

"Those are my adventures," she said lightly. "What do you think of them?"

"I think," he said, with a sudden indrawn breath, "that your story is very terrible."

Nick broke into fresh, untroubled laughter.

"You do? Why, how quaint! I think I'm lucky, as things are. It's a good job, and for as long as I behave well, I fancy. It's liberally paid and I like money.

I keep myself by my wits and my work—like an American—”

Was it a sneer? He didn't wish to think so. She hurried on as though to cover the impression:

“Those years in the States—yes, they *were* terribly hard if you like There's no room in your land, Mr. Traquair, for unhappy people You are all so pleased with life and yourselves”

“I disagree with you On the contrary,—”

“Of course you do but what do you know about it? However, I was wretched in America, penniless and at the mercy of hateful people. I've a preference for gentle-folk, even if I can't be one I understand their ways better, perhaps.” She tilted her arrogant chin. “I can manage them better, too. I understand my employer perfectly.” (How her way of dividing the syllables reminded him!) “And as to the real situation—nobody need know.”

“Probably many people guess.”

“I think not!” she countered in frowning denial, and again he was silenced. The question filling his thought was: Did she know what people were saying, and, if not, could he tell her? As for the girl, she was distinctly disappointed in the effect of her narrative, which had been studied in its way. Traquair's gaze was still unmoved and steady; his words direct and disconcerting; he did not seem in the slightest degree suggestible; he wasn't feeling her influence; he remained aloof. It put her out.

“But of course now *you've* appeared on the scene—”

“So that's why,” he broke in, “you wanted to talk to me?”

“I wished to know if you had told many people what you know?”

"Make your mind easy, Miss Grannet. I told nobody."

"Nobody at all—then or since? You're sure?"

"Nobody—then or since."

She made a gratified gesture and threw him a smile which should have enchanted.

"Then all I've to do is to ask you to be equally silent during your short stay in England."

Traquair noted the adjective and its limit; he bit his lip Nick hastened to add in her most melodious and ingratiating voice:

"One good turn deserves another, you know. I shall not fail to exert such influence as I possess in your favor as regards the improvements in the Silverwater Valley."

"You are very good, but—"

"Then may we call it a *quid pro quo*?" Her eyes belied her playful words: they were concentrated, even anxious.

"One minute—" he began, a little confusedly, then steadied himself and drew breath. "You have made things hard for me—I don't deny, but—have you reflected that there are times when truth is safest? You know enough of the world to know you may have to choose between the theories by which it accounts for your presence here? Surely, the truth, which is that you are a victim and without blame—surely that's preferable to the—the horrible other things people are saying?"

He realized while speaking that she had stiffened into antagonism She rose, forcing him to do the like. They stood facing one another.

"Gossip means nothing to me," she answered him. "The vital thing to me is not to have my hand forced by you or any other well-meaning person."

"But this," he entreated, "is far worse than just gossip—it's scandal—it's—Oh, you don't understand!"

"I understand very well indeed." She gave a little cynical wave of the hand and a cold laugh as she looked at him. "Pray—why should I care what is said if my lord does not?"

"It's *that*," Traquair acknowledged with something like a groan, "which is incredible—it's *that* I don't, don't understand. Oh, I allow it—but just the same—"

"No doubt you are accustomed to breathe a purer air." (Oh, how that light, smiling tone of hers hurt him!) "But, after all, it concerns me; it's for me to judge. By accident, you are in possession of this knowledge, which it suits my plans to conceal. May I count on your silence?"

As he hesitated to answer, the footman knocked and entered. Miss Grannet glanced at the card he handed her. "Tell Major Kellynch I will be with him in a moment," she said, and, as the door closed, she turned to the American enquiringly.

"Of course if you insist, I shall say nothing; only—"

"I want your word, Mr. Traquair; that is, if a gentleman's word over there means the same as it does with us?"

"Of course it means the same." At this culmination of her attitude during the interview, he flushed hotly. But Denis was no fool; he realized that these stabs were escaping from the pain of some deep hurt, that Nicole injured her own cause by making them. She had so plainly started out to win him, that had she been really a calculating person, she would have kept herself more in hand. Evidently this was a hurt girl rather than a hard woman. He turned gladly to the door and she realized her error.

"I knew I had only to ask—don't I owe it to you that I'm here?" she asked warmly, but the young man merely looked over her head at the wall—"And I'm only asking you to say nothing to anyone about what you know happened in the past—that's all. If you want—if you want to defend my character in other ways—" she ended a little uncertainly, "I shan't mind!"

He made no response whatever and her voice turned crisp again:

"After all, the secret will not weigh on you long We shall talk to Lord Heriot about your business and I suppose your stay in London will only be for a short time?"

"Only for a short time," was his grave echo, as he took his departure.

CHAPTER V

“ Dizzy? ‘course I knew him, but he was long past the cut-velvet waistcoats Like? Like a corpse dressed in a white overcoat with many little capes to it Feeble, fiery, impassive Took a fancy to me when I was but a lad and gave me my first mission ‘cause he said I was ‘a manoeuvrin’ Pict! Witty? Oh, beyond anything, always Somebody told of ‘em you know, that Gladstone always said more than he meant, but that Dizzy always meant more than he said For myself, I didn’t mind that Mr. G. should treat the Almighty as a card-sharpping accomplice, while I always felt that Dizzy valued a gentleman at more than most of us are worth Still, I remember his tongue—there was a fella—one of us—and Dizzy said he was afraid to offer him the Thistle—for fear he’d eat it!”

Heriot was talking. As his secretary moved quietly about her little office which adjoined the dining room, she could hear his voice, rich, eager, with a ripple of little chuckles in it, and knew that he was pleased with his audience. Through the half-open door, she caught a glimpse of the table with the two men: the host, leaning back, cigar in hand, its blue trail rising above his head; the American leaning forward, enrapt. From this second figure, Nicole gladly turned her gaze back to her desk his presence made her distinctly uneasy. Ah, well, next week or the week after, at latest,

they would surely be rid of him! She continued her work of opening letters, unfolding them with precaution, for Heriot disliked the sound of crackling paper.

It was half-past three: luncheon had begun at half-past one. Denis was having the time of his life; he had no chance to feel in awe of his remarkable companion, he was too much carried away by the rapid and colorful flow of talk, but he did recall with amazement that Lord Heriot had spoken of a busy day. The table before him bore the débris of a wonderful meal, beginning with what Traquair called hard-boiled eggs and going on to asparagus "almost as tall as Me" his host said. There were one or two bottles which he regarded more with respect than welcome. The room which furnished a setting to this scene was old-fashioned, heavy and rich, the cabinets that stood about held ancient silver, rare Persian pottery and enamels. Over the mantelpiece, Heriot by Sargent, in Peer's robes, whose scarlet and ermine seemed his natural wear; on the opposite wall, Heriot by Boldini, distorted, fantastic, rococo and young

"They called me the Old Master, y' know—the year Sargent showed that one," he explained, standing under the picture, his great height rising to it—"never cared about t'other fella—Boldini—myself; but he did Jimmy Whistler, so he wanted to do me—the Peer and the Peri, he called us You were asking about Mr. G? Old De'il—! can't say which was the most poisonous—his temper or his temporizin' He liked my verse though, sent me a post-card about it Prime Ministers read poetry in those days—now, nobody does."

"I do, sir!" Denis said, confidently, eagerly. "I know lots of yours—some of 'em are simply splendid

—specially I like ‘The Lost June,’ that begins—” he declaimed a verse or two.

“Where art thou straying
June? Art thou delaying
With golden feet upon a distant shore?
Will thy warm kisses never touch us more?
Chill May doth still enfold
Us and her arms are cold.”——

“You must write another, sir, like that, when you see the rhododendron in bloom along the Silverwater!”

“Eh! Eh!” said Heriot, a smile of gratification touching his full mouth, “So you read, too, do you? Maybe I shall go there someday. Meanwhile there’s a bit to be showing you in London You’re not rushin’ off somewhere, are you?” he enquired, “the way you Yankees always do?”

Traquair gladly assured him that there was no reason to be moving on for some weeks yet and saw with satisfaction that the suggestion had been really meant. Lord Heriot settled himself back in his chair, poured himself a tiny, final glass: “By the Lord, the finest liqueur brandy in Great Britain!” lit another cigar, crossed the long legs, patted his garter knee with a fine, firm hand rather heavily beringed, and turned charmingly toward his auditor.

Denis never forgot that talk, although it proved to be one of many. For him, it was like a gallery of past figures and events, hung with tapestries of glowing colors. All the small felicities of description, the humor, the little phrases about great people: Dizzy, Mr. G.; Louis Napoleon, Eugénie (“Oh, my dear, such a darlin’ thing; but smiled too much!”) Cavour, Garibaldi, (“one of those chaps with long hair, who gave

his name to a shirt!") Swinburne and Wilde, ("such a witty fella! I wrote a poem about him and called it "The Last Satire of Juvenile.") Then apropos of nothing in particular, the hock-cup at Queen Victoria's parties; the delight of driving a hansom. . . .and how Lord Rosslyn, on seeing a very fat lady trotting in the Row, turned to say solemnly: "The joint is too big for the dish!" Finally came a general comparison of the World Then with the World Now.

"I won't say there aren't some improvements—never was the sort myself to stick to candles when electric light was to be had, and there was a deal too much humbug about us, all at one time, but the changes in our world here have done no one any good. Society's no longer society today, only a crowd. In my time, every Duchess had her circle—although I'm bound to say some of 'em were noughts—"

When the quizzical eyebrows moved up, the full mouth pursed; there were sparkles in the blue eyes, as he let himself be carried on by this racy flood of reminiscence. Under the charm which gave grace to slight and unremembered things, there showed at moments a layer of mental quality both able and authoritative. Heriot's careless brilliancies sparkled in full view but realities of reading and of experience underlay them.

The clock struck. Denis couldn't help glancing at it, fascinated though he was. The talk had drifted on to 1918 and Heriot had spoken winged words about the A. E. F. "Youth! Yours and ours—that's what did it, let the old chaps maunder as we may!" and then he suddenly fell to a lively account of the Special Cabinet Meeting held during the war, where £10,000 was subscribed in order to pay the Prime Minister's debts. But he noted the glance and paused.

"You're not worrying about those maps and things of yours, my dear, are you?" he anxiously enquired. "Plenty of time for all that you know. Now I never believe in lettin' *anything* interfere with me lunch!"

Evidently he didn't, so Traquair, hardly loath and remembering Mr. Waghorn's warning about his host's dislike of business, waved the "maps and things" aside and set them both to chuckling with a story about the negro troops in France. He had no anecdotes of celebrities to contribute, but he had a vivid touch in portraying such experience of life and affairs as fall to the lot of a young lawyer and these had a certain value for Heriot, if only by way of novelty. . . . He owned to this:

"Everybody is more curious about Americans than they used to be The States today is the coquette in the political comedy. She tried for fifty years by every wile of naiveté, noise and novelty, to attract the attention of Europe, and, now, by Jove, we offer her honorable marriage and she turns her back! Doesn't let us forget her, the jade; she's always there—like a light in one's eyes. . . ."

These amazing folk, who were apparently trying to make over the world of things as they are into a world of things as they Ought to Be—they were worth studying. Besides, young Traquair's likeable looks, his independence, his honest "I don't think so, sir, at all!" his open delight as listener, these pleased, as other things had ceased to please. Not for many months had Heriot been so well entertained; Clayton went downstairs and commented upon the return of his master's *verve*, while the guest himself had a pleasant awareness of success, when he noted how his host's brows drew together in a frown at sight of the secre-

tary standing on the threshold. Miss Grannet, cool, business-like, in plain, professional dress and impersonal, professional manner, looked past the visitor straight at her employer. Her presence was disturbing; it was profoundly disturbing; it dragged Denis back to reality and pointed a cynical finger at the host who had exerted himself to charm—who had so charmed.

"Your appointment, my lord, with Major Kelynych?"—

"With Tom?" Heriot, answering, was plainly annoyed. "Tom can wait. You know what he comes for—what he always comes for. Tom can wait."

Traquair had risen. "But, please—! I must go. I've already trespassed far too long—"

The secretary sent him a veiled but grateful glance; Heriot shrugged. They rose and left the dining-room, the host towering on ahead. A man, standing at the window of the adjoining room, turned as they entered it, a man for whom Traquair felt the sudden and disagreeable sensation of hate at first sight. There was little to justify such an emotion, perhaps, in the newcomer's appearance: he was of no special age and of a type equally to be met with in Berlin, New York, or Paris. Spare, sallow, "used" as the French call it, with thinning hair and a glance at once dull and bold, he gave the American an indefinitely predatory impression This, then, must be the heir, the man Mr. Waghorn had no liking for, he who would one day be Heriot and St. Helier's . . .

His uncle said: "Well, Tom?" and went on talking to the guest whom he did not introduce.

"You'd better come back tomorrow and we'll have a look at the maps didn't have time for 'em

today, eh, did we?" Heriot said, and Traquair, not without amusement, saw the secretary gravely noting down another appointment in her little book . . .

When, however, he returned the following afternoon at the indicated hour, he found Lord Heriot wreathed in graciousness and geniality, as though but newly come from a banquet on Olympus with presences like his own. There was no sign of secretary, maps or papers, no mention of them.

"Oh, there you are—bless you! Yes. I'm takin' you on to the Lords, y'see we're just in time," he held watch in hand. "There's a Debate on the French question and I'll be saying a few words Commons? Oh, if you like—but they're such a crew nowadays no man of taste could listen to 'em for a quarter of an hour not that we're much better, my dear—dullards all." Before Denis half-realized the change of plan, he had been ushered into the waiting motor, and Heriot sat stately beside him in the grey top hat as they turned into St. James's.

"Changes at St. Stephens? Fewer than elsewhere perhaps, but even there—'Tis sufficient to ruin an aristocracy, I've always maintained, to let 'em do as they like—look at the Romans, the French, and ourselves! Now the democracy is doin' as it likes, and with the same result Checks and balances such as you have, are the only common sense, and, look you now!—they tell me you're crazy over there to be makin' all our mistakes and call it Progress!"

The hour or so spent at Westminster was very interesting, from the moment when the shining grey topper was placed on its peg, beside others with equally historic labels. To be sponsored by the owner was

plainly something of a distinction. Moreover, among this group of tall elderly men, with simple and dignified ways, Heriot shone, to Traquair's hero-worshipping pride. None among them was quite so tall and striking as he and he bore with him also a radiance of humor and intelligence of which his colleagues showed small trace. When he rose to speak, he delighted his auditors.

"Wouldn't he be wonderful," the American thought, "in Common Pleas No. 3! I wish we had him to argue the McCandless case! Why don't they applaud?" for it never occurred to Denis that the low growl by which the Chamber expressed approval would be noted in the Times next day as "prolonged and continuous applause!"

His enjoyment of the afternoon and the plainly favorable impression which he produced in one or two quarters, tended to confirm Lord Heriot in his kindly whim. No question that Denis's flattering, attentive face and quick responsiveness had lifted the elder man from a listlessness which had been growing on him of late and stimulated him to much more like his old vein. One or two cronies told him so in a language of their own Therefore, plans must be laid . . .

Traquair must dine with him at the Carlton in company with a friend of his, Lord Wroxeter, who had a liking for Americans of the nicer sort In order to make sure of the date, Traquair must return to Berkeley Square, where he was hustled into the house as if he were an old friend He found himself therefore waiting in the reception-room for the return of his host, and it was there that he became reluctant eavesdropper to a conversation in the little office-room—a conversation, alas! which immediately

dissipated the clouds of pleasure which were bewildering him and brought sharply back the evening of his arrival in London and his dinner with Mr. Waghorn. An unintelligible question asked by the secretary was answered by Heriot in his clearly-carrying voice:

"I can't see why you're so persistent in the matter, when you see how full my day has been!"

"Unfortunately the date, my lord,—the time is running short. Two of these letters have been awaiting your signature since day before yesterday—"

"I tell you I am sick of Tom's affairs I'll not go guinea-pig on any share list his friends are starting—and that's that! As for an advance—I'm disposed to decline. He's had money enough these last two years."

"Very good, my lord. I'll write to Major Kellynch what you say."

A pause. Denis seemed to see the two figures fronting one another.

"Well, don't you think I'm right? What does Marrindon say?"

"Mr. Marrindon would, I think, advise waiting."

"Very good: wait Meanwhile, I'm busy."

"The mortgage matter and the letters cannot wait, my lord."

The secretary's voice was respectful but firm. Instinctively the listener felt that, notwithstanding the words just said, she had gained her point and Major Kellynch his cheque . . .

"You badger one so about these things ! You really think then, it is so important? I dessay Marrindon would agree with you—he generally does Well, my dear, if you insist, you may bring me my pen Oh, you have it there already, have you? Give it here!"

CHAPTER VI

MR. WAGHORN, to whom Denis told as much of these events as he thought fit, appeared to be gratified.

"I am not at all surprised," he admitted, "at the effect Heriot made upon you on first sight. I well remember the similar effect which—I think I told you?—he produced upon me. A striking figure And that you made a favorable impression is most evident. Heriot is supposed to dislike Americans. And the secretary now? Did you see the much-talked-of lady?"

"Yes, I saw her," the young American replied a trifle absently, as if nothing in the world could have been less important. Mr. Waghorn turned toward him with a gleam behind the spectacles which was more like curiosity than he had shown for years.

"And what—er—did you think of her?" he enquired.

Traquair replied truthfully: "Oh, he overshadowed everything she seemed a quiet young woman" and once again his elder companion was invaded by the strong suspicion that the young man was clever, i e., that he did not convey any impressions that he did not wish to convey.

This conversation took place in a cab which carried the two men to dinner with Mr. Gilbert Cheke, editor of the Tuesday Review. A new after-war weekly had seemed inevitable in view of the changed conditions

of English life nor could anyone but Mr. Cheke have been chosen to make it a success. Even in less than a year, the *Tuesday Review* was quoted as producing a marked effect. Mr. Cheke had been a friend of Mr. Decimus Waghorn, who, some people said, was financially interested in the new paper; he had been to the States and knew the James Traquairs. He lived at Hyde Park Gardens, and it was on the way there that Denis looked from the cab windows down the long, gradual vista of Baker Street, into the delicate blue mist of an April evening. A deepening of this mist in the distance, gathering into nebulae around the street-lamps and into grey wreaths over the house-tops, caused it to seem London's favorite dress, which she wears oftenest and which is the most becoming. This misty veil enhanced her charm for the newcomer and revived the feeling of romance he had noted: his imagination travelled hither and yon behind that curtain and trembled with the thought of what it might hold for him. There was a strange familiarity about it, a welcome that his very bones were aware of: the atmosphere of London is friendly, not hostile, and he yielded to it, yet a little uneasily. He was not yet thirty and sensitive; from the very first he had felt that this journey was to have important consequences. He was to play his part—how? and where? Was this house perchance to be the stage? His heart beat a little . . .

But Traquair was by nature social: the house, and gathering, soon dissipated this dreamy illusion. Low voices, kind eyes, and a novel background, absorbed his attention. Pictures, books, portraits and autographs, the accretion of a long career, half-academic, half-literary, these surrounded him; he seemed to have stepped into the pages of a book of reminiscences . . .

He heard his name murmured once or twice, then his host's daughter took him in charge, a wholesome girl, round-faced, with wonderful fair hair and yet a dissatisfied look. She made him aware of his fellow-guests; he was flattered that most of them were older, although they were none of them in the least like Heriot.

A certain Sir Wilfrid Harradene, K. C. and evidently able; his wife, Lady Harradene, who was tall, thin, white haired and gentle-eyed, stood talking to Mr. Cheke and afterwards to himself. A distinguished and knowledgeable pair they seemed; and Denis was impressed by the close attention which Mr. Waghorn paid to anything Sir Wilfrid said. Mr. Cheke, the host, was big and bearded; he had that outdoors look which Englishmen of literary habits are apt to have. His eye was inward and absent, and his voice pitched so low that much of what he said was lost in his beard. No such difficulty attached to the speech of Christopher Vicary, Esq., the well-known critic, who had the typical stage voice, with the same cutting edge as his pen, and who was careful to preface his good things with a warning cough, so that they should not be missed

Before he had time to classify the others to his own mind, they were moving in to dinner where Denis found his place beside Mabel Cheke, toward his hostess's end of the table. The Miss Naunton, who sat at his other hand, was, he was informed, no other than *the* Miss Naunton, who during the War, had acted in Arabia as Chief of Police and Secretary of Foreign Affairs rolled into one. She was active, nervous, acute, not especially young, with a fleeting, half-cynical smile; and the only sign of her Eastern life was the premature

wrinkles at the corners of her clever eyes. Miss Cheke had assured him that she was "a great dear" and undoubtedly long practice as an Oriental despot had given her a firm grasp on conversation. Denis noticed that she, indeed all of them, looked for answers to their questions, and, unlike his country-women, listened to the end of his sentences. They also took a certain standard of talk for granted, which was a novelty and a stimulus to an American There sat opposite him a handsome, reserved-looking elderly lady, whose name he did not catch, and a man of his own age whom everybody called "Ewan," who seemed very talkable and jolly. It was to the young man named "Ewan" that Traquair found his attention drawn after the conversation with little Miss Cheke had begun to prove somewhat laborious. Some remark "Ewan" let drop about being torpedoed off the Ionian Islands brought Denis' interested response, and thus evoked the incredible experiences of the young man named Ewan, which Ulysses himself had hardly equalled—including as they did, imprisonment by an Island Circe, wanderings disguised as a Kurd and final arrest as a spy by his own countrymen, somewhere in the neighborhood of Gallipoli! Traquair was led, while he and Mabel Cheke breathlessly listened to this story, which was boldly, picturesquely, but not very willingly, told,—to reflect on the strange effects of those years of War. Particularly, when one stumbled upon a usual sort of man, going about his humdrum occupation, who had for four tremendous years led a life of violent adventure on land, sea, or in the air, busied upon appalling tasks or strange investigations, or buying unheard of things for unimaginable purposes as a part of cataclysmic activities; but now was sunk again into the

background, indistinguishable among his fellow-men. Denis said something to this effect to the young man named Ewan, ending up: "I've always maintained that we can't get rid of it—the War is the one interesting thing that's happened in our generation!" And he was somewhat daunted when the other gave him a brief stare and remarked: "If you ask me—I'd say it was a great Bore; I never got back my form in cricket from that day to this!"

During the pause which followed this little rebuff, Denis thought he heard a familiar name and turned his head to his host's end of the table, where Sir Wilfrid Harradene had been congratulating the editor on the last numbers of the *Tuesday Review*.

"Very good work, Cheke," he was saying. "Those articles on Between Past and Future, y'know—, interesting straight through,—very suggestive indeed!"

"Quite so, Sir Wilfrid, and I think we're keeping it up—our next number is, to my mind, the best yet planned and I think you'll enjoy it. We are fortunate enough to open with a sonnet by St. Helios—his first for some time, a very characteristic one." Looking around the table as he made this announcement, Mr. Cheke caught Denis' lighted eyes and addressed him kindly.

"I suppose, Traquair, you know who St. Helios is?"

Mr. Waghorn followed his host's glance to the American and inwardly admired the innocent manner with which Denis asked if that were not the name generally given to Lord Heriot and St. Helier's?

"Exactly Now I don't recall how he got the name—it was years ago: some second Empire lady gave it him, I think And then Spy put it under his cartoon in *Vanity Fair*. Nowadays it's used

affectionately. It always means something, y' know—when a man is given a nickname."

"Like Old Abe," Denis offered, pleased.

"Just so—that was Abraham Lincoln—if my memory serves me?—quite."

There was a pause, yet the subject still seemed to interest the table. Mr. Vicary cleared his throat.

"St. Helios," said he, "writes seldom, but still holds his audience, in my opinion. And he remains—I think no one here will controvert me—although a Peer, a most impressive personality. In my article, I've called him the Personality without Peer,"—he coughed and went on, continuing to address Traquair because of his plainly marked interest: "I gather you've heard in your own country of his highly-colored youth? Yes? Now that the 'pale purple even melts around his flight' "—Mr. Vicary's cough was triumphant here—"we're all struck by his rather lurid sunset!"

"Oh, come now, Vicary, come!" Mr. Cheke said tolerantly. "All that was dead and gone gossip—way back in the 90's—after all!"

Miss Naunton had been moving her arm about, twiddling her rings and desiring to come into the talk, which she did with crisp decision.

"That's what I want to ask," she observed. "Lord Heriot, we know, is a law unto himself, but my idea of his day is that it was so proper! How did he succeed? How did the Old Queen swallow that affair with the dancer? And how came our chaste grand-mamas to have him at their parties?"

"Wouldn't you like to have St. Helios at your party?"

"Ah, but I'm a decadent, post-bellum Georgian, y'know. And after the way *they* used to talk!"

Here the elderly lady opposite suddenly spoke with a touch of authority and concern: "He was very careful always about bringing Mme. Nicoletta to England Yes, I used to hear about it whenever she chanced to dance in London, he used to be in Paris. Oh, he was very careful the Old Queen shouldn't hear of it he wanted the laureateship, you see."

"And besides," observed Mr. Vicary, "Heriot was Victorian in everything except the proprieties . . ."

"Like the rest of the Victorians?" Miss Naunton challenged.

"Very good, indeed yes, yes!" and Mr. Vicary smiled his self-satisfied smile. There followed a short pause. Miss Naunton shrugged one bony shoulder and permitted a smile to visit her thin, controlled lips.

"Of course," she said, "these things were all before my day and I've been so long in the East that nothing can surprise me Still, I confess that, since my return, history seems to be repeating itself We're all interested in St. Helios; he's a sort of national institution, but he's getting on, y'know, to be so giddy. Who is this new lady? Does anybody know? One hears the wildest rumors! Is she really an Oriental, as they say?"

Mr. Vicary appeared to regard this query as personally addressed to himself and his manner became very competent.

"As it happens," he proffered, "I've just been hearing all about her recently, from the very highest authority. The lady is of partly European blood, a relative, so I am told, of the late Mata-hari and trained in the dance by that great artist. Heriot is said to have

bought her from the Javanese troupe attached to the court of the Sultan of Manderam—but I do not believe that myself: it is a little too Eighteenth century!”

“I should think so, indeed,” growled Mr. Cheke. “What nonsense, Vicary! You are surely not serious? I tell you, the woman is an Hungarian, unmistakeably Magyar. I saw her myself a fortnight since, coming out of Heriot’s house, looking most business-like, and with all the effrontery in the world! I tell you, her carriage—everything about her—speaks of Vienna; she’s doubtless one of those gypsies from the Hungarian border.”

“You’re both wrong,” the nameless lady quietly observed, and all eyes turned toward her. “Someone who sees that household most frequently is my informant—someone really close to Heriot. The girl is no more Oriental than anyone here and her charm isn’t so much personal, I understand, as financial. She’s just a typist—from New York originally, and before coming to England she was Secretary to Mr. Rockefeller or Mr. Henry Ford or somebody like that, over there. They say that, since she arrived, Heriot has made thousands on the New York Stock Exchange.”

“Well, I prefer my own version; it’s more amusing,” said Mr. Vicary.

The young man called Ewan here remarked that he didn’t see why any Hungarian gypsy or Javanese dancer should act as a secretary when the music-hall stage was handy, and his support gave the nameless lady courage to uphold her theory.

“Precisely!” she answered. “It stands to reason. Even Heriot could hardly make the drudgery worth while.”

"Perhaps St. Helios desires to shine alone in the heavens?"

"He must be close on seventy. 'Tisn't likely—even if one holds with Disraeli that 'The Seventies are the age for the passions'—surely, you grant 'tisn't likely to be wholly sentiment on the lady's side?"

"Oh, I don't agree with you! He's still a most beautiful man, you know."

During these lively interchanges, old Mr. Decimus Waghorn sat observant, turning his bright eyes behind their spectacles from one speaker to another and finally bringing them to rest on the face of the American guest. The changes of expression on that face were the most interesting thing to him about the whole conversation. At the outset, Traquair had worn a look of studied indifference, veiled with that perfunctory curiosity with which any stranger regards the social phenomena of a new country. As the talk proceeded, this latter had been dropped in favor of a plain, though controlled, indignation. Old Mr. Waghorn noted that the whole, plastic, good-humored mask, with its laughing glance and sympathetic mouth, had straightened and stiffened into something, grim, enraged and determined; giving him quite a new idea of the character of his young friend . . . Nor was he surprised that this emotion emanating from the American was felt by the others, although not understood by them, causing little Miss Cheke to interpose gently:

"Haven't we all talked gossip long enough? What will Mr. Traquair think of us?" And so, breaking the talk once more into trios and duets

But the effect produced upon the solicitor had been too vivid to be dissipated as the cause for it vanished. The odd thing about it all was that he could not rid

himself of an impression that Traquair's feelings had sprung from knowledge of a sort—knowledge concealed for definite reasons—and he would not have been Mr. Waghorn if he had not tried to discover what that knowledge included. So on their way home he brought up the subject:

"I could see that the foolish gossip about Lord Heriot vexed you The truth is doubtless more sordid and less romantic than these tales"—He waited, but Denis said nothing—"After his graciousness to yourself, it must have jarred Yes . . . yes . . . but I had warned you these things are being said. 'Tis pity. We all rejoiced when he got his O. M. three years ago Being St. Helios, one wishes to defend him."

"Oh I don't want to defend him!" Denis said, a thought roughly, "One might, perhaps, if a single thing they said were true, you know If he were really what they think—just a lonely man—fallen into the power of a bad woman—it's happened before—it's not new—most of us would pity him I think—but when——"

He stopped, and the elder man quietly, idly, even, ended the sentence for him: "You mean—when one knows he is nothing of the sort——?"

"When one knows the truth, how can one defend him? The whole situation is—is unbelievable! That man—Heriot—I talked to—his mind is as clear as polished silver—he knows his world and yet . . . ! Look, there must be some part of his nature which wears blinders——" Denis rushed on in these broken phrases, only to gather up his feelings in one tremendous question. "How can he? How can he let such

things be told——such blackness rest on a wholly innocent—a more than innocent woman?"

Mr. Waghorn felt as if he had suddenly tripped over a fact as familiar as the rug at his library door.

"Innocent—more than innocent . . .! I fear, my dear young friend——"

Denis was in for it now; already he had broken his word in spirit and was feeling the relief of it. He brushed everything aside, with huge strokes, as a swimmer makes for shore.

"Oh, it's by the merest chance—and the queerest, that I know anything about it and what I know I'm not at liberty to tell—though that again, God knows, is impossible and—and without reason, like the rest of it! But, look here, I *can* say—that the girl's name is Nicole and she was named for her mother!"

CHAPTER VII

DENIS had broken his word—not three days after giving it. He had broken his word and he had broken along with it that picture of himself as calm, masterful man of the New World which he had expected to present to the Old. And now what was he going to do about it? Mr. Waghorn had made things easy; he had given Denis a look and asked no questions; he had taken off his spectacles and polished them (a token with him of great excitement); and nothing more was said by either man for the rest of the way to Denis's hotel

By next morning the younger had determined to thrust aside the incident into the limbo of broken resolutions and to take rather tardy refuge in the recollection that the lady had said he might defend her at need Clad, jauntily enough, in this justification, he set out on the week's activities, with a dim idea of clearing the ground with Miss Grannet at the first convenient opportunity. Till then, he desired to think about her as little as possible. He was to hear Heriot speak at the Lords a second time and afterwards be taken to tea with a friend of the latter—Lady Champyon—who had sent him a very special invitation. Heriot's amused interest in "me neighbour from Pennsylvani-a" was likely to render that young man's stay in London decidedly worth while.

Meanwhile, he began to love the England whose soil

lay not far from that in which his own nature had taken root. Yes: he loved England, the large movement, the unhurried leisureliness, the rhythm which was set more on being than doing—these were good things. Yet, as affection brought comprehension, he began to see the reason for so much misunderstanding between two worlds, different psychological influences producing different effects. That passion for privacy—the average American does not share it—and is therefore apt to regard it as affectation—just as the latter's sociable gayety strikes the graver Briton as affectation. Blunt frankness, which expresses the national ideal, is a perpetual shock to those social relations which the constructive toil of a younger country has kept upon the surface. People were more alike in the States because they had to be.

Heriot would have been Heriot in any walk of life, but it was useless to deny that his idiosyncrasies had not become thickened and heightened, colored and flavored, by being reared in that nursery of individualism. Perhaps in this lay the real value of an aristocracy; that it encouraged a man to be more freely himself. Traquair turned with regret from the thought of that standardized personality of his native land—stamped out by the million, like box-forms in different sizes, and generally filled with cheap goods: all of them using the same phrases, living in the same kind of apartment houses, wearing the same clothes, which were advertised in the magazines they all read, and being different only when they were discontented!

These were the natural reactions of an active mind and a sensitive spirit; others followed which were perhaps less favorable. After all, this was a country for the middle-aged and they laid a heavy weight upon it;

they were a millstone around its neck. Even the Berkeley Square establishment, although it was certainly not typical (good heavens! Denis thought indignantly,) cast much light upon manners and customs almost feudal in their way. He had been in and out of it half-a-dozen times before he knew there was another member. This was old Mr. Lewis Cust, a silent, absorbed and gouty depository of London lore, who for more than ten years past had made his home with Heriot. He had his own rooms, kept his own hours, lunched or dined as he pleased, grumbling loudly when things were not to his taste. Mr. Cust spent his days between the British Museum Reading Room and the Athenæum Club; he had not been out of London for five years on end and boasted he had never set foot in Trampen Park. Short, bent, blinking, covered with tufted beard, "like a weedy James I," as Lady Champyon described him, old Mr. Cust crawled in and out much like a badger in its hole. Yet, though he always called Heriot "HE" and was proud of never flattering that brilliant companion, his affection was loyal; never had an allusion to the secretary been known to pass his lips. Denis met him sometimes in the hall; in response to cheerful greeting he only blinked and grunted; evidently one had to take him for granted along with the pontifical Clayton and other fauna of the British Isles. For the rest, the household moved on an ordered pathway with a tranquil regularity which nothing must disturb. Heriot, though personally capricious and whimsical enough in his arrangements, seemed to demand this as a background.

Miss Grannet came every day about ten and departed at five or six, unless she had special work. When she passed Mr. Traquair in the hall, she never paused in

greeting; if she glanced at him over her typewriter, she seemed always to turn that glance gladly away. He felt she was thinking. "How much longer is he going to stay; why doesn't he sail?"

Major Kellynch, the heir, made his appearance at intervals; he was frequently to be found chatting with his uncle's secretary in the morning-room. Incidentally, what Denis heard about him in the freespoken world outside made him feel uneasy; there was something in the conjunction of this pair that boded no good to the Master of the house. That Denis should concern himself about the master of the house was highly characteristic; it constituted the special quality which Lady Champyon noted in him when she had him for tea. She had sent the invitation the moment she heard her old friend speak of the American, desiring to keep herself informed as to any new friendships Heriot was likely to make; a measure of self-protection which had become a habit.

So Heriot brought Denis and arrived moreover in a mood particularly radiant and gay—a mood which mystified Isabel Champyon. "Just as if," she told herself, "his son, or his younger brother had come home to him! It's very odd!"

Women are not philosophers or it might not have seemed so very odd. Lady Champyon did not realize that the gifted are pulled more strongly by human instincts than are the dull. In responding to this spontaneous liking of a younger man, nature was having her way with Heriot; it was the beginning of much that Isabel Champyon was to be slow to understand Traquair made a good impression, although chiefly because of his admiration for his elder. Misled by the wiry frame and thin face, she thought he looked deli-

cate; his spirits seemed high; his manners were ingratiating. She gave him a sort of smiling attention which he found extremely gratifying: women of her age he had looked upon heretofore as far too busy and absorbed to care about anything he thought or said. Incidentally, he looked about him upon a room filled with spring flowers; a room with old-fashioned furniture, a little faded,—and a good many photographs of men in uniform and small-waisted ladies in court-dress. The chair Heriot took was placed just so; he was plainly used to taking it. As he sat there, smiling, a pale, late sunbeam fell across the fine head. Plainly, he was happy to be there, holding that cup of jade green porcelain in his long fingers, and he made little jests with his hostess at Denis's seeming so pleased with them both.

Then Lady Champyon asked Traquair about life and customs in his own country, concerning which her mind was somewhat hazy, and she was surprised that he had not yet acquired the daily habit of tea.

"How horrid of you," said she sympathetically, "to be kept at it like that! Here we set aside that time to see our men friends"

"You see, I really don't know so very many girls as yet——" Denis answered.

"Girls? But why only girls?" Lady Champyon asked. "A young man ought to have a married woman friend to help him on in the world"

"Oh, but they're all so busy——!"

"Are they doing things any more important? What are they doing?"

"Oh, charities and committees and bridge—and things like that. They don't seem to have so much leisure as here."

"Good gracious, how dreadful!"

"From the rising of the sun to the goin' down of the same, it seems, the sexes don't mingle in Am-er-i-ca," Heriot explained, nodding. "Apparently, one of their pet prophets like Benjamin Franklin, (was that the fella's name, my dear?) didn't approve of entangling alliances I've been trying to teach Denis, but he's been brought up on strictly monogamous principles!"

"Then he'll be a good friend for you," she rejoined and her eyes laughed at him.

"Undoubtedly," said Heriot gravely, "he'll be the means of leadin' me to a better and a purer life! The kind you read of in their newspapers, you know——" and Lady Champyon liked the response she noted in Traquair's amused eyes.

She liked it so much that she went on to explain the very latest of Heriot's jests to the stranger; while the perpetrator sat looking amused too, and not a bit self-conscious.

"Yes, you must let me tell Mr. Traquair, Ian, he will appreciate it. You've no idea," she said, turning to Denis, "what he can be like! He was telling that lovely idiot, Helen Dorset, about his travels in Greece, and of course, she said she longed to go there; if only to rival that other Helen, you know!"

"Why, in that case, oughtn't you to go to Paris?" Ian flashed at her"

Their trio was interrupted by the arrival of a visitor; a man who seemed well known to the elder people and who immediately fell into animated talk with the American. He had made, so he said, no fewer than twenty-seven trips to the United States and regarded himself, after Columbus and Cortès, as one of its earliest dis-

coverers. This intrepid explorer had dined with a prominent Mormon and been to the top of the Woolworth Building; he plainly regarded these exploits as somewhat on a par with similar feats in Arabia or Nepal. He told Denis a number of extraordinary things about his own country which had been communicated by "my dear old friend, Senator Jones of Nevada." Incidentally, Traquair was to learn from this same gentleman—who was and remained nameless for him—something about the vicarious adaptability of the Englishman in search of knowledge; for it turned out that, in order to pursue his botanical studies, he was working *pro tem*, as apprentice to a market-gardener. This thoroughness of the race roused one's respect, since, if he wants to run a locomotive, an Earl of sixty will gladly put on jeans and lean out of the cab window with a pipe; if polyphonic music be the object, he will join a vested choir three times every Sunday; or, if acting as Special Constable you may even find him chatting over his beer in the kitchen with the cook. Traquair found himself liking this, and his look strayed meanwhile from Heriot's crested head to the tall, erect Lady Champyon, with her fine, irregular features, her serene gaze, and lovely hair snooded with a blue ribbon as Romney or Lawrence would have liked to paint it. Yes: they were very splendid, he thought, and very different—oh, very different! from himself and Miss Nicole Grannet, whom unconsciously he had classed together.

The recall of the secretary to his mind brought a belated sense of duty, since, on account of her plainly marked dislike which he'd given up trying to understand, Denis had been disposed to avoid her. But the following afternoon, having occasion to stop at Berkeley

Square, he went straight into her office-room and up to her typewriter.

"Miss Grannet," he began, and Nicole raised her startled eyes, "I wish to tell you that I've been thinking over our conversation of ten days ago and I've come to the conclusion that I can't consent to do as you wish. I withdraw my promise."

The girl, with her hands resting at either end of her typing machine, looked at him with dismay. His manner was definitely authoritative; it took her by surprise. Up to that moment she had felt completely confident of being able to deal with him.

"You gave me your word, I think?" said she in a low voice.

"Well, I break it, I withdraw it!" Traquair cried, speaking almost with violence "I was a fool to give it—to keep it is a *tour de force* I'm not capable of, and I should have known it. I supposed you knew something of the world—I was wrong—it was my business to know better."

She was really incapable for the moment of answering him. This was entirely a new person; unconsciously, she always looked for the unsure boy of ten years before.

"I thought you had some sense, apparently you haven't. Nobody but a little, reckless child would ignore what I—what I've been hearing these last days. I was an ignoramus to give my word, and there are things more important to a man than a silly promise It's a man's business to keep a woman out of a mess—if he can. Oh, I don't care what I promised or what you do in future," he hastened to assure her. "It's none of my affair then. After I've gone, you can

upset your own canoe as much as you like. But now, there are things I don't propose to stand."

Her gaze wavered and fell. She tried to protest, she stopped, because in his face there was a hardness equal to her own. She lowered her eyes.

"You needn't worry, you know," she heard the firm voice speak, in a relief of recovered mastery and self-respect. "I shall never mention you or your affairs—if only on Lord Heriot's account. But, remember, if I am questioned I'll answer the truth—if I'm told lies, I shan't agree to them. That's all!" He glanced at her downcast face with a sudden vexed sympathy. "This isn't on your account only, I repeat. Lord Heriot has been very good to me."

He made her an ironical little bow. As he left the room a sense of freedom followed him. His spirits rose; she could hear his laugh and Heriot's laugh as they quitted the house. The front-door closed.

Nicole rose suddenly her heart beat. She moved mechanically to the window, she stared into the street.

A motor, large and shining, waited before the house. Two men, in their white uniforms with dark blue frogs and cuffs, waited also, one at the wheel, the other, rosy and respectful, by the door, holding the rug ready to cover his master's knees. To admit the sunshine, the top had been folded back, while the flowers Heriot loved nodded in their vase between the front windows. Dark-blue the car was and speckless; white circles behind and below marked its snowy tires; the nickel gleamed in the sun, and the little silver figure on the bonnet stooped as if about to fly. First the tall grey hat got carefully in; then followed the brown felt.

As the rug was tucked, some kindly word was said, Nick could see the footman smile, gratified. The chauffeur, too, half-turned to receive his share of praise. Clayton standing on the steps, as old Mr. Lewis Cust came slowly up, smiled also at his master's jesting vein. On the pavement a short distance off, a couple of passersby paused to watch the little bustle of departure and to tell each other: "That's Lord Heriot, see? That's he—the tall one!" Few men know how to sit in a motor; Heriot did. There he was: magnificent, happy as a boy in the lovely day.

Now all was ready to start; the footman had taken his seat. Everybody was smiling because Heriot was in that motor. In an instant it had glided out of sight. Everybody had been smiling.

Nicole stood at the window and the wave of sudden loneliness that swept over her was as definite as nausea. She shut her eyes. In mockery, the picture rose clear before her: two faces—the old and the young—turned toward each other and the look in both was one of affection. Affection—strange, bitter word! She groped her way back to the desk and started to open a letter, "To the Rt. Hon. the Lord Heriot and St. Helier's ——" Another. "Dear Lord Heriot——." The girl laid it down, staring What she saw was not the formal words—she saw a girl named Kellynch, going off in that motor, and smiling, beside her father, who smiled back at her. How happy she looked in the spring sunshine: this girl she was not!

Old Mr. Lewis Cust, for whom Clayton held the door open, glanced after the car and muttered to himself. "Humph——! What a fancy we seem to have taken to that young man!" he growled as he stumped into the house.

CHAPTER VIII

THE Victorian memoir, through the medium of whose pages the Nineteenth Century endeavors to improve the manners and elevate the morals of the Twentieth, presents the picture of a vanished era, whose virtuous calm the modern reader can but survey with regret. In its pages many great mansions of sixty years since appear as heavenly mansions, while the writer's childhood was apparently passed in an aristocratic Eden, where any serpent was unfashionable. Nobody in all those blameless cohorts, as they are depicted to us, apparently ever smoked, drank, made illicit love, or gambled. "My dear Father" (the noble head of the author's family never lost his temper or his temperament, spent his leisure in the family circle (limited in one instance, to the not inconsiderable group of 277 members); and never forgot his duty toward family prayers, the Conservative Party, and the preservation of foxes and pheasants on his estate. "Our beloved Mother" asked for no pleasures in life beyond the care of her fourteen children and her numerous and devoted poor. So we read with growing wonder and admiration, until we chance to meet the author in person and set him to chatting about the good, old days. We put him in a comfortable chair by the fire with a cigar and ask him to "unbutton," as the French call it, and behold! what we hear is apt to be something different—very different indeed. A subtle transformation

takes place at the touch of the spoken word. "My old Guv'nor" we learn, in reality was a tyrannical eccentric and bully, buying hunters for himself instead of tutors for his children and feeding his family on raw tomatoes during epidemics of the cholera. "The mater," (poor soul!) a frozen lady, limited her responsibilities toward her children to seeing them once daily at tea and writing them Church of England letters when they were at school. Her sociological labors in the village consisted in stopping her pony-cart at the gate of its cottages to distribute soup, a flannel petticoat or two, and a cure-all liberally compounded of whiskey.

Since we have no wish to jest with Pilate as he washed his hands, the present chronicler must needs introduce the late Earl of Champyon as decidedly wild at a time when everyone else was either good or pretended to be so. During that period of English history when a titled guest might expect to be preceded upstairs by the landlord of his inn walking backwards carrying a lighted candelabra, or when cots were placed outside dining-room doors for the safer disposal of the incapacitated, Champyon's career shone with a certain garish splendor. He was the hero of one celebrated escapade and, at five on a June morning, supposed himself to be stalking an imaginary stag in Sloane Street, observed in hovering horror by a cabby and a constable, while his mother in her dressing-gown on the balcony watched him approach gun in hand. The bullet mark may still be seen on the window sill. Such excesses of imagination resulting from an ambition to rival his grand-father, who had been called "the six-bottle Champyon," led some people to say that the eighth Earl was mad. But if sanity consists in knowing what one wants, in getting and keeping it, this slan-

der was plainly undeserved. Champyon wanted mainly drink, sport, a certain young beauty as a wife; and to spend on these acquisitions as little as he possibly could. In these aims he was brilliantly successful, lived a long life by the aid of periodical visits to Carlsbad or Harrogate and now lies (under a Latin epitaph) beside his mother, to whom he alluded as "poor darling" and whom he called upon once a year.

Left at last in uninterrupted enjoyment of her own money, his widow began to reap the reward of virtue, of which she had been perfectly conscious. She was born the Honorable Isabel Cornwallis and in her girlhood, for all her beauty, had been regarded as a little too clever and too cultivated to be altogether in the late Victorian picture. Moderation being then as ever the ideal of female excellence, this brilliant young lady gave her elders a certain uneasiness. But time brings in its revenges and the very talents which caused Lady Champyon to seem out of key in 1880, kept her socially prominent and alive in 1920. The taste for books, pictures, music and good talk, which in her girlhood made some people afraid of her, was just the very thing that prevented her from subsiding later, like so many of her acquaintances, into a frightened and forgotten frump.

Lady Champyon had been one of Heriot's close friends for years, but it was only since his return to England in 1914 that their friendship had become one of those sentimental, elderly intimacies which are so often the solace of a well spent British youth. This "*amitié amoureuse*" was well understood by their group and filled an important place in both their lives. Her sympathy, her quick mind, even her hardness, were invaluable to Heriot, who displayed his affection with

touching openness. He wrote her little notes, sent her little gifts, took tea daily and called her his "dear, delicious friend."

All this passed the more easily since they were members of a society which rarely ridicules the middle-aged and which loved them both. Knowing himself to be impulsive, and proud of the fact, though often regretting the result, Heriot relied on Isabel Champyon's judgment, particularly when it came to new acquaintances. When he saw she approved of the young American he was greatly pleased.

His old friend, as we have seen, wondered a little that it should matter so much. She had of late thought him fallen into a bored strain, not unnatural, but dangerous with a temperament like his. Today he was, as he himself assured her, "Merry as a grig and right as a rat!" Every naiveté in Denis's observations seemed to set Heriot's shoulders shaking. Immediately, he told them about old So-and-So who "is fearfly pleased and proud at bein' named a co-respondent at seventy-five;" then quoted his friend Lord Wroxeter's description of a royal princeling as "practisin' matrimony, so as to be all ready!" She shook her head at him finally, smiling the while her tender and indulgent smile.

That charming smile, however, was followed, as soon as the door closed on her guests, by a graver look of wary meditation. In her hand was the cigarette she had lighted when Heriot had lighted his, but she smoked only because, if one wants one's age forgotten, one must do as the young do and now her first act was to throw it aside. This done, she sat awhile clasping the arms of her chair with her soft hands, and then, as if she had reached a conclusion, she rose, went

to her writing table and then and there penned in her pretty script a note to Mr. Decimus Waghorn.

Many years ago, during her early married life, a day came when as her friends had long foreseen, Champyon got on her nerves. A critical month followed, during which it looked as though the family coach, (blue, picked with canary and a crest emblazoned) was headed straight for Doctor's Commons. That it never arrived there was due to Mr. Waghorn, the family solicitor, who firmly mounted the box, took the reins of law and the whip of public opinion and so guided the runaway vehicle safely into more private byways. During the encounters of this period, Lady Champyon had come out the victor; her life from that time became much more worth living; she never forgot the fact and was not likely to forget it. For Mr. Waghorn she felt a genuine respect and gratitude, the affection of a tried friend, which feeling he, in his formal way, reciprocated, so Lady Champyon was very apt to arrange to see him when anything perplexed her. The pair retained that old-fashioned relation between lawyer and client, which is fast vanishing now that solicitors see one only in their offices for as short a time as possible.

Her note despatched, Lady Champyon rested in her chair for another quiet moment. She reflected that during all these years she had never known Heriot to have an American friend. All her other acquaintances had their pet Americans; she had supposed his indifference to the race to spring from that bitter past incident. This young man seemed agreeable—but what exactly did he portend? One would like to find out a little more about him before deciding if he were to be encouraged.

Mr. Waghorn, needless to say, appeared when summoned; as he no longer officially represented the family, the invitation was entirely social and he accepted it as such. Lady Champyon treated her old friend *sans facon*, she knew his habits, the chair he preferred, the way he liked his tea; she must, she told herself, get him well settled and hear him purr before she ventured on the subject which occupied her thoughts. This seemed today to take longer than usual, for, although he was most agreeable, touching his finger-tips together while he turned toward her his benevolent and responsive spectacles, yet his hostess was subtly conscious of a certain underlying alertness. Truth to tell, a cat does not usually purr while it is watching a mousehole and Mr. Waghorn's bright spectacles and acute ears were attentively waiting for the first sign of that little animal's furtive whiskers. He, too, had been having a perplexing week, in the consciousness that his American protégé was developing unexpected qualities, and of course he guessed that Lady Champyon must be having a similar experience.

The two friends had much to talk of: the dilatory spring; the chances of the Conservative Party, the hopes for a reduction of the income tax, the last cause célèbre. Mr. Waghorn, the lady thought, held Time at arm's length in an amazing way; Lady Champyon, the gentleman reflected, was almost prettier with that wavy grey hair and blue dress than she had been as a younger woman. Then——

"That young American Lord Heriot brought to see me," Lady Champyon said, "is your importation, they tell me?"

"He is the son of my old and dear friend James Traquair," Mr. Waghorn hastened to inform her.

"He has plenty to say for himself—but then they usually have."

"He is," Mr. Waghorn affirmed, "an intelligent and engaging young man."

"He amuses Heriot; he seems to have quite a sense of humor."

"I'm glad your ladyship thought so. He has the national enthusiasm and seems to notice everything in the closest way."

Lady Champyon agreed that Denis's countrymen noticed everything, but she didn't think they showed due respect for British institutions. She was afraid that sometimes they laughed at them.

"True, I think they are apt to be more idealistic than we and often more practical-minded," said Mr. Waghorn thoughtfully. "Most Americans see no reason why changes should not be made when the need for them is indicated."

"They are practical, I agree," was her ladyship's dry comment; "so I suppose this Mr. Traquair is not in England only for pleasure?"

"He has, I believe, legal business in London."

"I didn't know he was a barrister."

"They call them lawyers in the States. His father's firm is very prominent."

"They are rich, of course?" she sighed. "They always are!"

"James ought to have a competency by this time," agreed Mr. Waghorn, who knew more about Mr. James Traquair's means than he intended to tell, especially when he also knew there was no guarantee that any wealth would descend to the son. Mr. Waghorn had long since given up trying to explain American family

financial arrangements to his acquaintance; they were too difficult for the English mind.

"Heriot certainly shows a fancy for him. I never supposed St. Helios cared for Americans the way some people do" she paused to add confidentially: "After the outrageous way they treated him years ago."

"Was it outrageous? I'd forgotten," Mr. Waghorn mildly deprecated.

"Wasn't it? To put on all those airs of morality about a man of Heriot's position! They ought to have been honored to have him in their country!" She waited for his sympathy but it did not come. "Of course, those connections are regrettable—we all know how much harm that creature did. I never saw anything in her, on the stage, though she danced well."

"She was a beautiful dancer," said Mr. Waghorn.

"He would have done better not to have taken her, I heard it said at the time," Lady Champyon continued with a slightly reminiscent manner. "My brother Cornwallis was in the F.O. that year, and I remember his saying it was so tiresome of Heriot to get them in wrong with the States—particularly, as he'd been rather careful when in England he only lived with her openly, you see, in the South of France and places like that why, he'd been very careful!"

Mr. Waghorn prudently restricted himself to pointing out that other countries had their diplomatic limitations as well as the United States,—that Lord Heriot had not been accompanied by his mistress, for example, when he went to Vienna.

"Oh, but Vienna—of course he couldn't!" She protested in astonishment at the comparison. "Heriot knew Franz Josef well—Franz Josef used to have him there—why, he used to dine with the Em-

peror at Kathy Schratt's. Very few people ever did that, you know. But other places never made any fuss. Do you remember Percy Filmer? He took a whole harem with him to Nicaragua and nothing was said, and *that* was in America!" She made this point triumphantly. "But the States are always objecting to what we do, aren't they?"

Mr. Waghorn slowly finished his tea, while his hostess reflected that he must be growing old and dull to be so very unresponsive. She felt she was getting too little aid from her old friend.

"I hope Heriot isn't going into any wild financial scheme?" she asked, as he put down his cup.

"Oh, I think not," the lawyer patiently answered, "but I really know nothing about it."

"We all have such an interest in Heriot," the lady said, suddenly deciding on frankness. "He's the most distinguished one of us now left. He keeps marvelously young—I suppose it's because," she said gaily, "that he's always in love with somebody—but there it is. Of late his fancies have worried us—his friends and admirers—a good deal. Of course, you know what I refer to?" she ended in a note of gravity.

Mr. Waghorn said he did.

"Such distressing gossip—although I don't believe it all by any means. Still, the woman must be a veritable harpy. They say she dresses like a duchess and he does nothing without consulting her. All of us have been dreadfully troubled about it."

"Quite so. I understand indeed," said the solicitor sympathetically. He glanced across at her dignified figure and white hands moving delicately among the renowned Cornwallis tea-cups and he wondered a little.

"And so," Lady Champyon pensively continued,

"when I notice another stranger, another fancy, I can't help wanting to know what the new favorite's influence is going to be?"

"I can assure your ladyship that it can mean little but good," her old friend said, with convincing steadiness. "The Traquairs are excellent people—well-known people. The young man is a barrister and in good standing for his years. He fought well, I'm told. He does not expect to remain in England."

"Ah," she breathed, "I see."

"I confess I don't quite see the reasons for the intimacy,"

—"But surely," she broke in hopefully, "may it not be the means of detaching St. Helios from the other unworthy—entanglement? Americans always seem so moral. I wonder how this young man feels, although naturally he would not be disposed to criticize his noble friend, still——?"

"I can tell your ladyship one thing I learned from him," Mr. Waghorn replied—"something I did not know—which I do not think you know and which may greatly surprise you."

"And that is?"

"That is the young woman's—Miss Grannet's—Christian name."

"Her name," Lady Champyon echoed. "I always thought it was Gaby or Cuckoo or something like that?"

"Her name," he said, with significant emphasis, "is Nicole," and he looked Lady Champyon in the eyes.

"Nicole—" she repeated—"Nicole!!" the voice dropped into a deeper note. "You mean? Nicole——. Can it be possible?"

"I think it is more than possible."

"And we have all been wrong in thinking—you know?"

He hastened to disclaim. "Oh, I know no more than I have told you. The young man knows no more, I fancy; but to him it seemed quite plain. Yes: I think we may all have been entirely wrong."

Mr. Waghorn did not stay very long after this because he felt that his hostess needed a little space for re-adjustment. And he was right; Lady Champyon was a good deal shaken. She had assured him that what he told her, (if true), was an enormous relief to her mind; and she supposed that if he felt it to be the fact, she must believe it. It would account for a great deal and she ought to be very grateful to Divine Providence if this were the case—if it were not simply a coincidence of name. Could he be sure of this? Her old friend left her without any more vivid assurance, although himself plainly marked with conviction. Yet he did not, and in truth he could not, tell her anything further. Lady Champyon went slowly upstairs from the drawing room and entered her own little sitting-room where she could be quiet and alone. She had need of thought; but, instead of thinking, she found herself feeling—and not perhaps feeling as she had expected. On her table was a basket and an envelope the envelope contained Heriot's daily note the basket was full of fresh violets from Trampen Park. She gathered bowls for them and drew water; she lifted out the great purple bunches and dipped her face into their cool petals.

Yes: she should be grateful to Divine Providence that matters were not as she and others thought. Yet one could not forget that the ways of Divine Providence were not always such as caused his poor creatures

to be any easier in their minds. Quite the contrary—sometimes inconsiderately the contrary. She was rejoiced that her dear old friend was innocent and free of sin—but it is true that sinful ties are apt to weaken and may be broken, while it is another thing with ties of the blood. A secretary may be discharged—a mistress may marry someone of her own kind, but a daughter, unfortunately, is likely to stick on. Divine Providence had evidently not thought of that possibility.

She was indeed glad—*delighted* was the word she repeated to herself—but these situations in a family were always unfortunate and productive of trouble for the legitimate heirs. As she finished putting the violets into the bowls, Lady Champyon was conscious of a renewed and indeed a heightened, uneasiness.

CHAPTER X

*"London, thou art of townes A per se.
Soveraign of cities, seemliest in sight,
Of high renoun, riches and royaltie;
Of lordis, barons and many a goodly knyght,
Of most delectable, lusty ladies bright"*

THAT Lord Heriot had taken one of his fancies to Denis Traquair, became soon apparent to others beside old Mr. Lewis Cust, and even, in time, to Denis himself. There was nothing strange about it, for a man who held himself as childless and who, having enjoyed the garden of the era ended by the Great War, found himself wandering in the thorny, unsheltered wastes of the Twentieth Century. Despite friends and prestige, Heriot was a lonely man, and Denis had the adventurous temperament most congenial to his own. The elder loved spirit and quickness above all things and found novelty in the American assumption that custom is his to make, that, if he choose, he may forget there has ever been a past. Thereby Heriot found himself once more turned toward the future.

It is also true that Denis possessed the national habit of spoiling the people he was fond of, and that Heriot, tired of servile inferiors and outspoken old cronies, was eager to be spoiled. He liked Denis' admiration, Denis' enjoyment of his personal picturesqueness, Denis' independence (which he called "impudence",) and Denis' quaint little airs of protection, as though the

elder man were a brilliant child. It was long since anyone had protected Heriot and St. Helier's! The world had not seemed so gay for years. He found Denis infinitely amusin', and that Denis found *him* so, was more amusin' than all. They were always together. Side by side in the motor, Heriot's heavy, haughty, handsome face, the curl upon the forehead, Denis's thin, fine and fair, pointed with long moustaches, sat turned toward one another, smiling. Heriot was in constant chuckles over Denis; Denis constantly controlled his shouts over Heriot their congeniality was natural and tonic.

Denis could never grow dulled to his wonder and pleasure in the abundant and rococo ornament overlaying the personality of "my magnificent, my dear old boy:" and when Heriot drawled "Oh, my dear, let's go and bask in the smile of this too-lovely mornin'!" Denis felt, absurd as it seems, a pang of real joy. No wonder he fell into the regular routine such an intimacy demanded. At ten each morning came the message, "His Lordship presents his compliments and will Mr. Traquair lunch with him at half-after one," or "dine with him (a black tie!) at eight and a quarter," or "he will expect Mr. Traquair at eleven," or, "he will call for him at his 'otel at four." And this message would set the keynote of the day.

April slid easily into May; it was the season; and Traquair's mail grew heavy with cards of invitation. Such of his countrymen as encountered him in Albemarle Street or sought him out in the pleasant spirit of holiday-making, usually found him pre-engaged. While they were occupied in seeing sights and pictures, lunching and motoring and dining with one another, he had suddenly become an inmate of the house and was

looking at them out of the front window! Nothing could be more pleasant and exciting than this excursion into the high places of the earth, and Denis exultantly foreshadowed the pleasure at home, when he should write to tell them how his difficulties had vanished, how Heriot and St. Helier's had made him more welcome even than old Mr. Waghorn himself!

Every few days, Denis thought he was going to write that letter; the way was so clear to what he wanted—only, the “maps and things” remained rolled up on the secretary's desk, for Lord Heriot was always far too busy to attend to them. If Denis mentioned the Silverwater Valley, which he did once or twice, the dark blue eyes would cloud with impatience and Heriot would say: “No business while the sun shines, my lad, —we'll lay it by, like an investment, for a rainy day!” And when that day came: “I never do business in the rain; it needs a clear head and the full light of heaven. We'll go out, my dear, and shine on a dull world!” Ah well, who would have him other than he was? There was the faithful Marrindon to see that the substructure of life should not suffer by this attitude. And there was Miss Grannet, of course. But at this name, Denis winced and turned away. Miss Grannet at this time represented things which Denis neither understood nor wished to understand.

Meanwhile, he was feeling no strain among these frank, friendly people; he noticed that, the more freely he expressed himself, the better was he understood, and the more he seemed to please. He found that the habit of saying what one meant was a popular one. He found that, when the ice is broken with the English, the water underneath is generally warm; and that they respected anybody who treated them as they treated one

another. This wasn't easy for Denis (nor for any American!) but the knowledge added to his experience.

That dinner at the Carlton Hotel, with Lord Heriot and his friend, Lord Wroxeter, had been exceedingly illuminating and delightful. When Denis appeared, he found the two tall elder men awaiting him, surveying the procession of incoming diners with an air of perfect critical aloofness, and, as he followed, Heriot leading, to the table reserved for them, he was irresistibly reminded of the Three Bears.

Lord Wroxeter appeared to be a personality of the same vintage as Heriot, though less rich, less heady, and more diluted with the world of today—the world of affairs. A shrewd and stately gentleman, with an immovable countenance, an astute eye, and a look of having lived much out of doors, he showed a directness, an experience and a tenacity which were extremely characteristic. Plainly, he liked and admired his friend Heriot and St. Helier's, but with reservations which he might well have expressed in Horace Walpole's terms; "I revere genius; but I have a dear friendship for commonsense!"

On account of this quality, and his sociable inclinations, Lord Wroxeter had a large number of friends and was a personage in his way. Denis thought him interesting from contrasting qualities; he had a sort of blunt soft-heartedness, and a cynicism which he did not wish shared. Above all, he had pride that life had given him almost everything, good and bad, which it had to give, while unlike the elder man, he wished to keep in the movement, and understand the modern world. He had been to the States more than once; and he liked "your wonderful country, before your

paternal Government saddled you with this impossible Prohibition!"

This gentleman sat erect, with his hands folded small boyishly before him on the table's edge; listened, while Heriot, beaming on Denis, bubbled with talk; and came in duly with his own freight of anecdote and reminiscence, delivered in a voice less sonorous than his fellow peer's, yet with a flavor all its own. He had none of Heriot's histrionic quality; his face was quite immovable, but he had the same sense of responsibility for giving the guest an agreeable evening which was such a surprise to the young man.

While Heriot was bending an eye-glass upon the wine-list—the *maitre d'hotel* standing in religious deference beside him, flanked by acolytes with folded napkins, Wroxeter entertained Denis with an account of a kangaroo which he once sent to Queen Victoria from Australia.

"T'was seven feet sittin' on its heels and a few wallabies thrown in for good measure But d'you know the Lord in Waiting at Windsor wrote to me *so* reproachfully: 'Don't you think this is whoopin' it up a bit, my dear chap, when a whoppin' big hippo arrived by the same train?'"

And Traquair had hardly time to absorb this quintessence of the Edwardian mode, before the host put his eye-glass by and said regretfully, shaking the ambrosial curls:

"That will do—the lad has no vices, not even the vice of having none—no Wine, Woman or Song—don't drink—don't eat either—eh?"

"Wait and see, sir!" Denis cried laughing.

"They tell me the Beauvrays have lost their chef,"

said Lord Wroxeter, solemnly, and Heriot pursed his mouth to commiserate the loss.

The two began to share gastronomical reminiscences; Wroxeter describing how the departing guests of Alfred de Rothschild used to be presented with a huge decorated paté and a pastry cornucopia filled with confectionery—"no doubt," he concluded, "to remind one to tip the artist."

This subject having preceded the arrival of dinner, the Honors List was touched upon and the elevation of a certain City magnate explained.

"She's been wantin' it—devillin' him out of his life to get it for her. Kind hearts are more than coronets and she's a little less than kin, they say. Oh, quite so—but they must be given *something*."

"So long as they leave us the Garter," was Lord Wroxeter's comment." Like Melbourne y'know, I prefer the Garter: there's no damned merit about it!"

Denis averred loyally that he was too republican to see anything in titles anyway, but he laughed when Lord Wroxeter observed that he seemed to recall a good many generals after the American Civil War. At this Heriot's musical voice made itself heard by quoting: "Qua propter quoinam nil nostro in corpore gazae, Proficiunt neque nobilitae neque gloria, regni," and his friend (to Denis's surprise) plainly recognized the quotation, which certainly Denis did not. They fell into talk about the Latin and they knew whereof they talked; they drifted into discussing elder English writers and they had read the books they talked of. When Heriot touched the field of poetry and *belles-lettres*, which lay like a rich garden around his multi-colored mind, one might have expected vivid interest and sensitive phrases. But Denis was surprised to find Lord

Wroxeter also well stocked—where did he get it from? Up to that, time, Denis had regarded himself as more than usually possessed of what is good—but these two had read things which he merely had read about, and there is a great difference. He wondered if it was a national or just an epochal difference?

As the dinner went on, the talk grew unfettered and gay, and Heriot's smile became so gracious that other diners were made aware of the cheerfulness emanating from the trio,—and were curious as to the identity of the slight young man, who was dining in such distinguished company. Heriot had the reputation of being an exquisite if fastidious host, while it was true that since the War no figure presented just the same combination of personal distinction and delightfulness, with an actual sum of achievement. Even if one hadn't read his poems, or his "Letters to the English in Time of War," one must have heard about his War-work, or his good looks, or his height, or his voice. As a person, he seemed to have caught the social and popular affection, in the way that certain sovereigns of the past have done. So not a few people wondered that evening who Denis Traquair might be.

By and by, books as a topic, yielded to the ever fascinating comparison between the old world and the new, between the civilization in Europe and that less understood civilization which was building in the West. Here the young man held his own between this delightful pair, who showed not a little of the actor's attitude toward an audience. Their interest in his world, of course, had its sharp limitations. Aspects of the American scene interested them, the business and sports of the States, the likelihood of their becoming more or less Europeanized in future. Denis was freely and

acutely questioned concerning these. But there were other matters, personal and social, regarding which they merely smiled and looked kindly upon the young Barbarians all at play. Their memories held a stage setting and pageantry, beside which the barn-storming society of today was like a twopenny show set up by gypsies at a village fair. Heriot, whose tendency to dwell in the Past had grown too marked of late (so thought his friend Wroxeter,) launched forth into animated pictures of Roman Opera, and Russian Ballet, of which he seemed to remember a great deal. From this he passed to what he termed "the flutter of that great, bad world of the Second Empire," and the last Review at Longchamps in 1867, "when three Emperors stood to take the salute And then? Dust, my dear, dust and ashes and defeat in such a brief minute after! Death and burial for the lot of 'em, till the trumpets blew in 1918, when only Eugénie was alive to hear them!"

This was a grey mood and must not be allowed to prevail. Traquair was reminded of Schumann's *Carnaval*, when, after Sorrow, the clowns came tumbling upon the stage. Cora Pearl with her bad voice, Morny with his eye on the Stock Market, Margot la Rigoleuse "who was considered a good nursemaid for me, my dear, when I was turned of seventeen!" The beautiful Mme. de Castiglione, "like a piece of Sévres and with the loveliest sculptured feet! And that gay little pug of a Pauline Metternich. You remember Pauline, Wroxeter? She drove with me on the box-seat of the drag one long afternoon, to the scandal of all the Kinsky's in Vienna—but that was after the Empire fell."

Lord Wroxeter remembered, smiling a little shyly and

said he sympathized with Liszt, who became an abbé, "Pour me sauver de ces femmes damnées" Vienna was on the road to St. Petersburg and its tragedies, over which heads were shaken, voices lowered.

"The Czarina—poor lady!—had never a happy moment the last time I dined at the Winter Palace—one of those dreadful State Dinners, you know, Heriot?—and there she sat for hours and she expectin' the little Tsarevitch, and lookin' as white as a sheet "Indeed, ma'am' I said to her, 'I don't see how you bear it as you do—all the inconvenience and the sufferin'!"

Lord Wroxeter was serious; he saw nothing funny in the domestic intimacy of this anecdote, at which Denis was wildly tempted to laughter, though he hid the impulse by a belated attention to the Chateau d' Ay.

Seldom in the past had the American found himself so constantly the listener; he was glad he knew when to listen. A vanished era was evoked: something quite done and over was showing itself. When such as these two went, silence would fall on it, nor would anything be left for the archaeologist. It had been a singularly unproductive decade; little warmth had come from the rays of the sunset, now drawing down behind the violet screen of night Well: he himself belonged to the fierce new sunrise and of course he was glad, but he must admit the light was a little garish. Somehow he had never doubted the future as he doubted it now. The world's standards were on the whole lower; especially for the people who ought to hold them high. Once wealth had been a means of cultivation; today those who achieved it cared only to have, not to be. Denis being what he was, had felt ashamed that his own generation had let pass the cul-

tivated tone. His personal ideal, colored by reading and by an exceptional family background, had fitted him to appreciate that elder type with minds and tastes rich and polished, with individualities that added zest and interest to life. Why should it be a virtue to be empty and dull? One wondered—yes, one did wonder—and knowing them, the Victorians, somehow made a difference. If only there had not risen before his inward gaze to add to his perplexities, the picture of a young woman's face, pale and with miserable eyes.

The pleasant dinner came to an end, though pretty late, and, as Heriot had an engagement, he departed, leaving his guests to finish their smoke in the lounge. As the tall figure moved away, greeting and being greeted, the crested, grey head high above lesser mortals, Denis followed it with his affectionate glance. To be like that in a crowd, well, it was something! When he turned again to his companion, he found that gentleman regarding him with a steadfastness which was not unkindly.

"Isn't he glorious?" asked the young man simply, and Lord Wroxeter nodded.

"Yes," he agreed: "*il est sorti du cuisse de Jupiter*," as the French have it." He waited a moment meditatively before he added. "Pity, he's fallen into the hands of that woman—they're always the trouble."

"Are you so sure?" Denis rejoined stiffening.

Again Lord Wroxeter nodded. "'Fraid so." His answer had a directness which gave a serious emphasis to a serious matter. "He's lonely, y' see—gettin' on, Heriot is, and that's what does it. Heir's no manner of use—rotter, Tom Kellynch as his father was before him. Oh, I know the gal may be his daughter—his and the Nicoletta's. I've heard it hinted—gets

about here and there; but suppose 'tis—makes it no better I'm afraid."

"Why not?" said Denis, as brief as the other.

"Illegitimate, my dear chap, that's what Natural daughter—wrong side the blanket, hangin' around the house, lookin' for what she can pick up. 'Tisn't decent. He ought to settle something on her—he's plenty—and marry her to a deservin' bricklayer or an honest business man, if he can find one, in Manchester or the States or somewhere. This kind of thing really doesn't do, makes talk; makes trouble for the succession; puts all the women on their ear; Isabel Champyon is so furious, she simply doesn't utter. 'Wish I could talk to him about it."

"Why can't you?"

"Dangerous: that sort of thing," said Lord Wroxe-ter, shaking his head, "he might say to me: 'Watch out, my dear chap, that one of the errors of your youth doesn't come back and camp out on the doorstep with a strawberry mark on the end of his nose.' There's no telling," he chuckled gently.

"Did'ye ever see her?"

Denis said he had and said no more.

"So've I, often: handsome as a picture! And she may be the daughter, after all. Yes: I'd like to warn him——"

"In that case, surely," said the wise Mr. Traquair, "there'd be no need."

The other gave him a look and blew smoke. "Quite so. What? Why, she is his bitterest enemy if that's it keepin' her out of the estate and title: the Kellynch women can succeed, you know She'll never forgive it. They *hate*, those people do; never

knew it to fail. I tell you if he doesn't watch her, she'll marry Tom Kellynch to spite him. Well, 'tis no affair of mine, as you justly observe," he added, for Denis had said nothing, "and no doubt I'd better be gettin' along to the Club."

CHAPTER X

"My dear James :

"Doubtless your son has written you as to the progress of his affair in London, of which I have little to add to my last letter. During the past fortnight I have seen him but once or twice; he has been entirely absorbed by his noble friend, Lord Heriot, who has taken to him one of those sudden likings which have not often, as in this case, been so well justified. Your young gentleman, therefore, has been seeing a London season under the most favorable auspices, and his praises have drifted even to me in my quiet study. I make no doubt whatever that he will ere long return to you, bearing his sheaves with him and the richer by an experience as novel as interesting, for Lord Heriot is still a great figure in his world because of his rich, perhaps, in my view, somewhat flamboyant personality, and Denis has a quickness of perception that renders him especially appreciative. But no doubt I tell you what you already know.

"I was relieved to hear that you shortly expected the Pennsylvania Railroad to resume paying the dividend which has stood my friend these many years and I hasten to assure you that your analysis of the Tonowah Oil stock situation was most full and convincing. You will act for me as for yourself when the time comes and I may add that a 20% profit is unheard of in the United Kingdom at the present time.

"Present my warm regards to Madame and the daughters and believe me, my dear James, as always,

Yours most sincerely,

Decimus Waghorn."

Another letter went to America by the same ship.

"Dear Father:" (Denis wrote)

"By this time I fully thought to have settled up the Silverwater Valley matter and to have got Lord Heriot's signature to an agreement which would be satisfactory to us both. If I have not yet done so, it is not because I have neglected it, but because things have turned out altogether differently from what I expected when I reached London. The truth is: Heriot detests business and postpones it whenever possible, and, as he has been in all other ways kindness itself to me, it is simply impossible to hurry him. Things go slower over here anyhow, where they have different ideas of relative importance, and Heriot dislikes Americans, he tells me, just because of their insistence on their own point of view. Now, I can't help seeing that he likes me and I think him the most delightful person I have ever met—he is altogether different from anybody else. He has overwhelmed me with kindness and hospitality; indeed, I never dreamed how hospitable these English can be when you know them, (just as we are, though we talk so much more about it;) and I have been seeing all sorts of interesting things and meeting interesting people because of his great kindness. We get on beautifully and I make him laugh, which he likes. There's not the slightest doubt that he will do everything we wish when the time comes; but you must let me be the judge of that, even if my return is delayed.

You said I needn't hurry and I certainly feel brisker for the vacation

"A letter reached me from Edith saying she was sailing shortly and I hope to be still here if only to see her. I shall write to Mother in a day or two. I hope you didn't forget to have the path by the Silver-water cleared; it was badly overgrown this spring. Best love.

Always yours

"D."

This letter was perhaps the most disingenuous the writer had ever sent. He knew perfectly well that his father's idea of a vacation did not extend beyond a month, while the day this epistle was posted, young Mr. Traquair had accepted invitations for the first part of June. Heriot had planned this and that: Denis was to be taken down to Trampen Park and there was even talk of Whins in September. When he shook his head, Heriot looked surprised and not especially pleased. What then, was one to do? He might have been enlightened had he overheard the conversation with Lady Champyon which had led to Heriot's forming a definite opinion as to the duties of the Traquair family toward their son.

"So it's he, is it? the father—that made old Decimus Wag a perfect Cræsus? Oh, my dear, I know—old Waghead has more put away than any solicitor has a right to. Go back to the States—pooh! The lad fought, didn't he? And now they've got his nose to the grindstone. Well, he can just stay on a bit. I like the fella and that's that!"

To Denis himself Lord Heriot broached the subject, in a manner characteristic of his attitude toward life.

"Since it's your father whose help made Old Wag-head so rich that he's positively uncomfortable,—'seems to me the least he can do would be to make you his heir. He could leave you a tidy bit—he's no family. Might suggest it to him—he ought to do the decent thing by you, my lad! They say he's regularly rollin' and he can't take it along where he's goin', you know."

Denis had opened wide eyes and replied: "Mr. Wag-horn—leave me money?" in tones of such blank amazement, tinged with indignation, that Heriot could only laugh helplessly at his astonished face. It was one of their cleavages, this sensitive pride which had so opposite an outlook. To Heriot, money was a thing to be accepted from any honorable source, but not in itself an end worth working for; it was just something that underlay life, like the cellar, and a gentleman is not supposed to occupy himself with the cellars but with the structure that he built upon them. His objections to his heir, Tom Kellynch, for example, was not the money that the latter spent, but the way he spent it.

As the intimacy progressed, the American met other differences demanding tact. He had no experience with which to understand the elder man except what reading had given him; but he discovered, as often the case, though the illiterate would have us believe otherwise, that literature is a sounder preparation with which to meet such natures than is life. His own education, standards, and circumstances, were clean other than Heriot's; there were times when he had to grope his way, moving tenderly. One didn't want to hurt St. Helios, because there was a softness in him and he had got this softness from an upbringing which avoided reality, which hated the harshness of truth. For all

his age, distinction, and vital energy, Heriot at moments recalled the era which had put pantalets on piano-legs, while it permitted red lights over the brothel-door. Nicole Grannet's position in his home was only thus accounted for. Her father's wilful blindness regarding her; his combination of lofty, seigneurial liberality and personal aloofness, with a continued weakness of the will whenever she opposed him—these were peculiar results of the earlier atmosphere, which his was not the temperament to resist. Through the labyrinth of this nature, Denis at times walked bewildered, clinging to any clue whose source should not dishonor his friend. How loveable that friend! how rich the charm he possessed when he wished! what a touch of excitement his presence always brought! And yet——! Denis as he went about the London world, found these two words always thrusting themselves into the fascination this man exerted upon him *and yet——!*

These words were summoned to his mind by little things: by a raised eyebrow, by a covert smile, by the sight of a young head bent over a desk, a face set always into shadow as if ever exerting control, a young woman going and coming, in the house but not of it; or even by the figure of Major Kellynch on Piccadilly, dapper, lean, slightly flushed, entering the Berkeley Square mansion and nodding to Denis casually in the hall. Somehow, since Lord Wroxeter's observation, there was an ugly, a sinister quality about that figure, "a rotter, as his father was before him." Was he?

Denis noticed that Major Kellynch's appearances were very apt to coincide with his uncle's absence. Once the American came in unawares upon a little scene of gallant leavetaking, for Major Kellynch, ere departing, was in the act of lifting the secretary's hand

to his lips. Mr. Traquair hastened past the door without pause, but he had seen. He had seen also the sensitive flush all over Nicole's white face and he was suddenly extraordinarily sorry for her. She was then, not quite so hard as she had wished to have him think, yet, why, to him, was she always hard?

One morning he entered her room with an alert step and paused at her desk.

"I have had a present!" he announced mysteriously. "See what it is?"

He held up before her a book she quickly recognized: that slim, dark blue volume of "Letters to the English in Time of War" which had been Heriot's gift and challenge to his countrymen. "Do you see what he has written? 'To Denis, who doesn't need it. H. and St. H.'" Of course I need it!" he cried loyally. "Anyone does—the most stirring message to our generation—and he's tucked in his sonnet, the one I love best, on the last page."

Miss Grannet looked at him curiously: how stirred he was!

"Yes: he's very gracious about things like that," she remarked.

"I read scraps of them when they came out—they were quoted everywhere, you remember; and one of our pamphlets in France had a paragraph and I read it over and over—the one that begins: 'Foch says: No victory without battle, but I say——'"

He rushed on, and, watching him, the girl's face relaxed and became warm with sympathy, light shone all over it. Denis became suddenly aware that he was looking at what nature had intended him to see. It was something glowing, beautiful with feeling. He stopped suddenly.

"I'm so glad it pleases you," she told him and then constraint fell again like a shadow between them. He was leaving the room, still holding his prize, when she addressed him from her desk.

"Those maps of yours, Mr. Traquair—you know they are still here—I think, however, that I can get his lordship to look at them this afternoon, if you wish?"

"Unfortunately," said he, "we are going to the match at Lord's and afterwards I'm dining out——If they are no trouble——?"

"Oh, they are no trouble," Miss Grannet observed civilly; "only," she continued, slipping a sheet of paper between the rolls of her typewriter and adjusting it, "I judged that you will be sailing home soon and would like the matter settled."

"The date is not yet finally fixed," he answered, and something in her expression brought him hot-foot back to her, strong with an impulse which he no longer intended to control.

"You know what I cannot understand," he broke forth, a trifle breathlessly, "is why you always treat me as an enemy—always, always—! You have no reason!"

"Have I not?" the voice was even, and she began to tap the keys rapidly as if in haste to finish her work. But Denis deliberately put his hand on the machine to stop it while he spoke.

"I have given you no reason to treat me with such hostility—none. I don't,—I do not," he repeated furiously, "agree with you on important matters, but I've tried to do as you wish. Why do you always act as though you expected me to despise you?"

She raised her eyes to look straight into his. "You

showed me that you despised me," was her low, steady reply, "ten years ago"

Something interrupted them at that moment; Denis hardly remembered what. He grabbed his hat and left the house. But there was illumination in the words for him. Never had he dreamed that her antagonism was of so long standing a date as that last interview of their's on the island. He had supposed it to be the outcome of her present position, the strain of false pretense under which she lived, the contrast between what was—and what should have been. That was bitter enough, God knows, to excuse anything. Her situation seemed, to his thinking, impossible: this place as an employee and outsider in the house which should have been her home! One didn't see how a sensitive person could stand it. Better far the "deserving bricklayer" of Lord Wroxeter's suggestion. Nor was it easier for Traquair to accept the motive for her remaining as a venal or an unworthy one, though there was much to support it. The incident he had accidentally witnessed a few weeks since had been often repeated in one form or the other. Nicole's influence over her father was great; she ruled his house, and, in certain ways, cool, persistent, respectful, she ruled his mind. He trusted her, he relied on her, he was evidently and pathetically fond of her, without being in the least aware of it. His was not a nature to see clearly, to know itself. Unfortunately, young Mr. Traquair had his share of that sense of personal responsibility for bad management everywhere, which is the burden of the more conscientious among his countryfolk, who set forth ardently into the world with what appears to them to be a simple and practical method of settling international difficulties and starting the millennium. Their

schemes are evaded and rejected, and they are likely to find themselves disliked or accused of selfish indifference, because they resent the rejection. This is as true individually as collectively, and Denis ought to have known better than to interfere in what was none of his business. For some reason he burned with zeal over it, poor fellow! and he needed only the illumination of her remark, to set him off on a fresh piece of quixotism. A new and pleasant theory possessed him; he abandoned his conception of Nicole Grannet as a cold adventuress, to substitute for it the idea that what really held her in Berkeley Square was a hidden devotion to her father. This was very like Denis, who understood affection far better than hatred, and it accounted for everything in the most satisfactory manner. He became extremely energetic at the thought, since they became thereby natural allies, and he felt it was his affair to establish this alliance as soon as possible.

CHAPTER XI

*"Why should I keep my soul in this dark light,
Whose black beams lighted me to lose myself?"*

OPPORTUNITY came quickly. A day or two later, as he was rounding Berkeley Square, he caught sight of Nicole leaving the house. She was dressed in her dark suit and close toque which outlined her slender grace and drew the eye to her as to something exotic. Her whole figure moved with that touch of dauntlessness which he had heard termed "effrontery." It made him sorry; he hastened his pace and, coming up, called her by name. Miss Grannet turned; she saw his purpose; incidentally she noticed the activity of his appearance in his new well-fitting clothes, and noticed it with dislike.

"May I walk beside you for a little?" Traquair asked. "I want a talk"

Miss Grannet raised her eyebrows. "Business?" she enquired.

"Of a sort. I'll be as brief as I can." He was direct and also sincere. She felt surprise, but could hardly show objection. Together they crossed Hay Hill and entered Lansdowne Passage, where Traquair insisted on pausing to drop a coin into the hat of the old man who groaned there. Along Curzon Street Miss Grannet had one or two errands, during which her companion waited outside, and not until their

faces were set toward Piccadilly, did he address her with purpose.

"I wanted this chance," Traquair began, looking carefully over her head, yet speaking frankly, "because until day before yesterday I had not dreamed how completely you misunderstood me."

"About what?" she parried, but of course she knew.

"About everything. You've been hostile from the first—oh, please don't take the trouble to deny it because I shan't believe you! Let us," said Denis eagerly, "be frank for once. You showed your dislike, but I had no clue to it—I was simply puzzled. You see, I never set it down to so long as ten years ago—the time when you showed me Heriot's letters and I ran away—Yes; I certainly did run away," he firmly asserted; "but not from you."

"Oh?"

"No: not from you, Miss Grannet, but from the letters themselves. Have you read them since?"

She shook her head. "I never opened them. I returned them in due course to Marrindon."

"And then, you were only a little girl——. Let me tell you something. A boy of twenty is a curious compound—he's reticent, he has his vague dreams—but if he's wholesome-minded and has had the right mother, he has his delicacy too. Those were terrible, terrible letters—even now," said Traquair with a catch of the breath, "even now, I remember words and phrases in them that——. They were a revelation of tragedy and torment expressed by a poet. I wasn't old enough or callous enough to stand such a revelation. They were life: I couldn't bear life. That was all. So I ran. You thought I shrank from you because you were his daughter why, I never thought of you

except with pity, then or since I was horribly embarrassed—as much for you as for myself.”

He stopped; he had been full, been frank; surely she must understand——? He glanced down at the lashes that drooped black against her cheek.

“You do see, don’t you?”

“I see,” she rejoined smoothly, “that like all men, you thought entirely about yourself.”

“Oh, I don’t deny the pity came a good deal later,” young Traquair said, and this remark was the first to penetrate the girl and shake her prejudice against him. “Of course the primal feeling was just flight, I guess—to get away from that pain—that passion. What could you expect of a boy of twenty? No doubt an older person would have been calmer——Please remember that it was the first time I had come into contact with such tremendous things.”

Nicole became aware that he was forcing himself to speak, that even now shyness tinged his voice, but she let him finish without her assistance.

“I don’t defend myself—what I do say is—that it had nothing whatever to do with you—or with the fact that your mother and father weren’t married.”

She fought against the conviction his words and manner brought to her.

“You Americans always seem such hypocrites!” she said with curling lip, but there was no reality in the accusation, and he answered her gently so that she was ashamed.

“It’s not peculiar to us, Miss Grannet,—and I am not hypocritical now. I’ve tried to tell you the truth about a raw boy, confused and awkward in the presence of something altogether outside his experience. That’s the

truth, and that's all the truth Won't you believe me?"

"I will try," she replied unwillingly and he saw a smile begin in her eyes as he smiled down at them.

"That's capital," said he joyously. "I'd so much rather you disliked me for the right reasons and not for the wrong ones!"

"Who said I disliked you?"

Disregarding this question, he piloted her across Hyde Park Corner and turned westward into the Row. Riders of all ages and types were returning from their exercise. East Indian Rajahs in khaki-colored turbans with the long streamers that denote nobility waving behind as they cantered; merry groups of children on rocking-horse ponies; the judge with his eye-glasses; the armless lady, who holds the reins in her teeth. Watching these were more children, dogs and governesses, nurses in blue veils and babies in perambulators. The sky was softly grey, but there was no wind. Denis fell into step beside his companion with a strong sense of relief, of happiness even. He began to talk freely—an impulse which, had he been wise, he would have held in check while he studied more carefully the reserved expression on the face at his shoulder. Miss Grannet indeed smiled, but it was a smile with a difference. She was already repenting that she thought better of him, that he should have convinced her. The more he exerted a certain power over her and a certain charm; the more her jealousy remembered that he had exerted them also over her father. She became artificial, and, just as he started, she paused to exclaim over the beauty of a sleek horse that passed them. He waited impatiently till she was ready to walk on.

"Well, we've got that settled at all events," Denis

began again comfortably. "At least, I wanted you to understand. In our first talk I was all at sea myself and I've been trying to clear matters up ever since——" he stopped interrogatively, but Nicole said nothing so he continued—"particularly since Lord Heriot has been so awfully kind."

Sensitiveness in his voice showed what such kindness meant and she struggled impatiently against the swift liking that it evoked.

"It seemed to me, you know, that you and I are natural, predestined friends and allies. In the first place, I *know*; and, whenever you say the word, I can stand by to stop these evil tongues. In the second, we've a strong bond—we both admire—we're both so fond of Lord Heriot."

Now, this was a foolish speech, naif, over-confident, irritatingly protective, but it hardly deserved the flash with which she broke it off.

"Fond of him!" she cried incredulously, "Fond of Lord Heriot! Where on earth did you acquire that monstrous delusion?"

"Why, I thought——I believed——" said Denis helplessly, but the girl did not wait for him to finish.

"Fond of him!" she repeated cruelly, "Look here, Mr. Traquair, you want to understand, it seems, and I like you better, or perhaps I dislike you less, for that wish. You want to be honest; I'm willing—but for heaven's sake let's leave sentimentality to the stage where it belongs. Why should I care for Heriot? Because through an utter selfishness he gave me a life that hurts in every moment?"

She didn't expect him to answer; she rushed on: "You're reasonably perceptive—you people generally see what's on the surface! You've been here a month

—you know who I am by right—who I ought to be. You know what people say I am—you’ve been good enough to worry over it—and yet you think all this is likely to make me care for the man that’s caused it? Good God!”

She threw back her head to laugh and the taut, white line of her throat hurt him. How the hate poured from her!

“Listen—you shall hear! When I was a little girl, Maman took me with her to Russia and we paid a visit to a big country-house belonging to some Grand Duke. It was 1905, during that first revolt which was almost a Revolution. There were other people—it was quite a big party and some of the guests, so it turned out, had been mixed up in the rising. Well! one morning I woke up and it was very late; nobody had called me as usual. I sat up in bed and screamed for my nurse; she didn’t come. All was quiet; the place seemed empty. I scrambled out of bed and ran into Maman’s room; it was empty too and all in confusion. I hurried out into the corridor; the room doors were open but the rooms held nobody. Then I grew too frightened to call. I hurried along the passages and down the long, long stairs. That huge, great palace and only a little girl in it——! All as silent as the grave. My heart beat—I felt suffocated, but I found myself, still in my night-gown, going down, down the grand staircase, all carved and gilt, until a turn brought me in sight of the lower hall. It was full of men—soldiers—talking and laughing. One of them—a young officer—looked up and saw me, and laughed—I must have been a comical small figure with my bare feet. ‘Why, look!’ said he to another and speaking French; ‘there’s the little——’ and he used a word I didn’t

know, but I knew what it meant. They weren't unkind; they carried me down and gave me milk, while among themselves they talked of Maman—and I've never forgotten That night I cried and cried and could not stop Yes: there's a memory I owe Lord Heriot—and there are others—there are others!" She turned to him, her face strained with pain. "Mr. Traquair, that night you saved me from drowning—well, I hadn't tried to kill myself but I wonder that I had not, I was wretched enough! Why, for all I mattered to anybody I might have been a stray cat!"

"But surely since then," Denis protested, deeply troubled by the intensity of her voice, the clouds and lightnings of her eyes, "since then, when you think what he has done——"

"Nothing to wipe it out—nothing to make me fond of him—nothing!" She was hurrying on so fast he could hardly keep up with her and she accented her words with little, cramped gestures of the hand. "Even Heriot couldn't let a stray cat die on the door-step; it wouldn't look well—it isn't done! But how often did he see me afterwards—his child, the child of the woman he adored?—Not once! He sent his solicitor" She drew a laboring breath. "That night—oh, that night I fainted there in his room—when he lifted me and his face bent over me—so handsome, it seemed godlike to me. Why, then I'd have died for him gladly, gladly—*That* I owe Heriot!"

Her weight on the word was like the crack of a whip. She was so shaken by the storm of feeling, she rushed ahead so blindly that she never noticed the kind hand at her shoulder, ready in case she stumbled.

"Fond of him! You mean because he's charming,

handsome, and gifted—that may make other people fond of him but not me, oh, not me! I've power over his mind; if you like—I have power, and he doesn't know it, he doesn't know why he keeps me on, but I know. I hold what I have gained and I shall use it as a right,—! It's the only right I have Do you know why he bought that land in America?" she suddenly demanded, and her companion shook his head.

"To give me—to settle on me. It's far away in a new country—presumably they won't mind bastards there!"

"Oh, don't, don't!" the young man said. "Don't talk, don't feel like that" he had guided her toward a bench, where she dropped as if exhausted. "This is all so bitter—and when one feels such bitterness one cannot see clearly. He's not what you think—he's really fond of you, and he's lonely too; you know!"

"He has friends to defend him like Mr. Denis Traquair," she mocked and there was a smile behind her wet eyes.

"No more than you have, if you wish," he rejoined with a simplicity that gave Nicole pause. He was leaning forward to speak earnestly and frankly, not looking at her, and she was grateful for that. "The fact that he has made so magnificent a provision shows his thought for you. It's only your ignorance that makes you sneer at it——"

"You're very rude," she interposed, quivering.

"No; I'm not rude I'm talking sincerely and I'm expecting you to listen the same way. We owe each other honesty at least." He turned towards her his grave face. "It's superb country; if you are lucky enough to come to it, you shall see——"

Again her resentment was roused; she broke in with cool, incredulous laughter. "Oh, please!" she said with raised hand. "You waste all that on me, you know. You forget the wretched years I spent in your wonderful country. Thank you!—I have no intention of becoming a settler in the Silverwater Valley. I prefer England and English life I prefer my own place If one isn't born to the purple, why there are ways of dyeing oneself that color. And I'm not squeamish, I'm not sentimental, I've been forced to look out for myself, and I shall do so. When my chance comes, neither you nor any other shall prevent me!"

"When your chance comes," he observed unshaken, "you will find you think otherwise."

A pause fell. Nick realized that, as she put it, she had given herself away sufficiently, that she must recover her poise, not fling away her game. She found herself studying the quiet grey-clad gentleman, who sat poking holes in the path with his stick, and still, to her inward fury, she felt him maintain a certain mastery over the interview. Even yet she hadn't shaken him, or bent him to her will; it was maddening, and there he was, in her way.

"Whatever I think," she continued speaking more quietly, "it will not matter to you. Only I've let you see what my real feeling is, you know, that you may understand. Any alliance between you and me is impossible."

"But why?"

"Because," she explained, "you must be either with me or against me. You cannot be on my side if you are on Heriot's. Life is a castle. There is an inner and an outer ward. I live in the outer ward."

"And Major Tom Kellynch? does he too live in the outer ward?"

She felt surprise, both at the question and at the tone in which it was uttered. She summoned her wits to answer. "Not now, perhaps. But there was a time when he lived there long enough to understand."

"From what I hear I seriously advise against Major Kellynch as an ally."

"Oh, do you?"

Denis was far past the point of noticing her irony. He went on, making use of every persuasive note, of every friendly suggestion. He was entirely confident that the solution of her problem was simple, so simple—if she would only listen to him.

"I don't believe in your wards and castles," he said meditatively. "I believe in—what's the phrase?—'the broad, bright, breezy common of the universe.' There may be fences—but they only look high from a distance; people cross them every day. I understand your feeling—who doesn't? It's terrible—you've had a beastly deal, and of course life is hard. But it's a better outlook now, except for your grievance. No one who sees your father as I do but sees he is affectionate. Only artificial influences have kept you strangers. That he loves you dearly and trusts you, I'm certain—And you know," he ended a little shyly, "I think that trust of his gives you a great responsibility?"

She twisted her hands together: every fibre of her nature cried out, beat against the truth of what he said. A rising anger shook her.

"Myself—I'm perfectly sure," Denis went on, "that if you go on respecting yourself in this work, faithful to him—the day will come when he'll turn to you of his own accord. He's bound to. Then there'll be no need

for bitterness—you'll forget it. You'll care for him, and what he gives you and what you are won't matter. Indeed, I don't think even now they matter, as you think they do. You want to be a great lady in this world? You're too real. Why, I prophesy you'd be happier on the Silverwater."

"And—if—I—disagree?" said she, weighing each word.

"You mustn't, because, whatever he is or has been, you've got to play straight."

"Oh?"

"Because of the two, you're the stronger, he's the more helpless——"

"Oh!"

"Because I cannot let him be hurt."

"Oh, oh, oh——!" she was up from her seat in a flash, stammering, her eyes ablaze. "You can't—you one man always for another, no matter what. Oh, how I despise you—how I hate you! Yes, all of you! Always meddling, always such hypocrites; thinking you can settle everybody's business, and careful to keep safe yourselves! Oh, don't speak to me" She was like a whirlwind, she flew down the path, and there was Denis left on the bench.

A gentleman, who was sauntering on the opposite side of the Row, had witnessed the sudden, stormy flight of Miss Grannet and paused to identify the cavalier so unceremoniously deserted. This done, he gave a sigh of gratification.

"Damned glad to see that," said Major Kellynch to himself, and, quickening his walk, he began to hurry as fast as he could in pursuit of the young lady's flying figure.

CHAPTER XII

SO IT HAD ended, as all his talks with Nicole seemed destined to end, in anger and disappointment. Surely, nobody who was in the right had ever been made to appear so constantly in the wrong. To know her real feeling only brought pain with it : pain and uneasiness. He could not forget Wroxeter's words, "They *hate*, those people do—" and it was this hate, visible and felt, which filled Denis with uneasiness. Even in a month, he had grown attached to his friend, and, when we love, we have sure insight where those we love are vulnerable.

Traquair sat long on the bench, punching holes in the gravel with his stick. He felt baffled and puzzled and hurt. When he rose he actually went in search of a cab to take him to Cockspur Street, where he enquired about sailings. He was just one of those "blessed peacemakers;" (he reflected disgustedly) just another idealist who might as well go home! And his countrymen believed, did they? in brotherhood and World Peace! He could have laughed.

Why did his affection for Heriot make her so angry? He never tried to deny Heriot's responsibility; it was true that, if there were sides to take, he would be found on Heriot's, because Heriot's temperament rendered him more helpless. There was something disgusting to Denis in the thought of this girl, going in and out, using her power, being given complete confidence, and

all the while hating like that! Naturally it was naïf of her father to assume that their relation ensured her loyalty; but then he was naïf. And meantime what was she plotting, she and Tom Kellynch? Oh, well, it was none of Denis's business—as she had reminded him—and he resolved then and there never, of his own motion, to talk to the woman again.

And the very next day he talked to her again, though it was she who forced the conversation, calling him by name as he passed through the hall.

"Please, Mr. Traquair—one moment!"

Very reluctantly, Denis came into the room where she was, and Nicole noted with a failing courage that his usually pleasant face was set into rigid lines. She stood in front of him with her head bent, her hands clasped together and for some reason, she strangely reminded him of little Nicole Grannet, standing in the Maine sunshine ten years ago.

"I wanted to say," she spoke in a low voice, "I'm sorry—I lost my temper I am sorry." Then she raised her head, and he saw that she was pale and her eyelids were puffed with weeping. But she looked at him steadily.

"I know it's impossible," said she, "for a person who has had a family and a place—as you have, sisters and brothers, and so on—to take my point of view—How can you understand—the Outer Ward? People like me, Mr. Traquair, live out in the cold and look at life through the windows. But you meant kindly and I ought to have kept my temper. I repeat,—I regret the way I spoke."

Denis bowed stiffly and said the silly phrase, "Don't mention it!" He had never felt so sorry for anybody in his life. She walked over to her desk and sat down

there, busying herself among her papers, while he answered with some mechanical form of words. She became aware that he had drawn nearer, that he was looking at her somewhat intently, and she at once resumed her everyday manner, impersonal and composed.

"It's true I don't understand," he agreed sadly, "because for a real person, like you, there isn't any outward. But there, if I say anything more, I shall just make you angry again."

"No, you won't make me angry today," said Miss Grannet; "you're a good sort, even if you did pull me back to life again I know. You want things made straight and smooth, things that were crooked before you were born. Let it alone—you'll be much happier. Lord Heriot shall do all you wish about the road and you will go home where life is so much more sunshiny and wholesome. Forget about us as quickly as you can, is my advice especially me."

This speech had a curious effect on the young man, who lost for the moment his pleasant assurance of manner. He was conscious of protest, of violent protest, of an excited uneasiness and of an almost hypnotic concentration on the bent, black head. There was a loose lock that he wanted to touch. He saw, suddenly, that she was looking surprised.

"Unhappily," he said strangely, "I can't do that ——" Their eyes met and held, but he did not go on.

The pause was interrupted by Heriot's heavy foot-fall, by Heriot's voice asking "And where's the lad?" Denis turned hurriedly to greet him; Miss Grannet began to rattle the typewriter. She heard the two men meet and their voices intermingled. After a space the younger one passed out and left the house. Nick lis-

tened rather closely to his step as he passed her door, but it did not linger. "That young man," she told herself, "is not at all a bad fellow"—and she was more confident of being able to manage him than she had been at any time since their first meeting.

Nicole finished her last letter which read: "Lord Heriot presents his compliments and informs the Editors of *THE BOUDOIR WEEKLY* that it is not his custom to furnish personal material for the public prints nor to grant personal interviews. A summary of his career and writings may be found in Burke's Peerage, Who's Who, and other publications of a similar nature."

When she had sealed her letters and made them ready to post, she sat a moment in reflection. Her work that morning was not very heavy, so she unlocked her desk drawer and took from it a letter which she read attentively, not for the first time. One paragraph she read twice

"So you see that I stand a good chance to make something really worth while if we can only get Uncle Ian to consent. He needn't do anything, just let his name stand on the Board of Directors. My allotment is certain then, and it's a sure tip that the shares are going to rise. Otherwise, I mayn't get any. Of course, if he did the decent thing by me with an allowance proportionate to his means and the estate, I shouldn't have to ask it. But as things are, a man in my position keeps finding himself always a bit behind. The worst of it is that I'm in wrong with him—he's never liked me. I've been no Galahad perhaps, but then neither has he. As you know, it's serious because, if he likes, he can leave every penny away from the estate and make the next Heriot a pauper. You've been my

guardian angel before now, so I'm not worrying. You know I'll be grateful if we can pull it off and you shall have your share when the time comes. Do your best for me and let me know. We can meet and talk it over somewhere, as I don't like to come to the house too often—he knows 't isn't affection for him that brings me."

She folded this letter, replaced it, and locked the drawer again. Her face was thoughtful and perhaps a trifle haughty. Then she gathered up certain papers awaiting signature and went swiftly upstairs and down a long corridor till she knocked at the door of the library. Heriot was seated at the window with his cigar and the Times; he gave her an abstracted nod, waving aside impatiently the documents she proffered him. Evidently his mood was unfavorable. In silence the secretary turned back to the door again, when suddenly he looked up and addressed her.

"D' you know," said he, folding his paper, "I like that chap Traquair—he's an uncommon decent fella—" He paused, as if for her agreement.

"I think," the girl replied, "that it oughtn't to be so hard to be decent when one has all that Mr. Traquair has."

"All he has?" Heriot echoed. "Just what d' you mean—what has he?"

"Oh, friends," Nick said, "father, mother, home——" She stopped, frightened. She had never said anything upon this key before.

Lord Heriot took the cigar from his mouth, as a man does who is suddenly steadied by a thought.

"H'm-n," said his musical voice, "H'm—you feel that, child, do you, eh? H'm I hadn't thought"

"But your lordship knew——" she asserted hurriedly, and for the first time he saw how markedly her words and manner were unsure and young.

"Oh, my dear I knew you knew," her father said; "yet I didn't realize—you realized Yes: life's easier for some of us than for others Caprice rules—not justice. Chance is lord of all. Some walk rough roads Life's far simpler for a chap like young Denis than ever 'twas for me By Jove, I was a child in a garden gathering flowers—all I could hold before nightfall, but not plantin' anything. That's why it is now I've naught left but a withered handful—roses—but their sharp spines still stickin' out. And other fellas who were wiser than I are sittin' under goodly shade."

She thought this relating the remark to himself, this imagery of expression, so very characteristic. She longed to turn on him and cry out: "And I——? What about me?" but she did not.

He went musingly on.

"No: I didn't realize. You know that I am providin' for you, don't you? You are to have some money and there's that tract of land in the States that's to be for you. You'll love it there—'tis beautiful, thick woodland—fresh and romantic. Your mother took one of her fancies to it, years back and I was never denyin' her anything. She was all for settling there straight away. Lord, how I laughed! She and her fifty pairs of shoes in that oak-filled gorge! Well, well But you'll like it, child. I'm gettin' a good house built—no doubt you'll marry out there some day and be as happy as a queen." His voice all the while was faintly interrogatory, but Nicole did not answer. "'Tisn't a wild country, you know,

my dear—'t isn't the Far West It's an eastern state and as established as England; only not England. You'll have more chance there—and a home to make—you'll belong there, among good folk—look at this lad! 'Twill be a shelter, an occupation and your own place."

His plan and perspicacity pleased him; he felt a little surprised at her lack of response.

"Meanwhile, I'm payin' you enough, aren't I—? you're satisfied?" he questioned anxiously.

"Thank you, my lord; my salary is sufficient," Nick found herself saying. She clung to the door-handle and turned her white face aside into shadow. Those words about the future and her own place,—why, they brought that sick longing for home to a sudden crisis in her, so that she broke into sweat from head to foot.

But Heriot never noticed; he thought she was merely embarrassed by his liberality. He slowly got up out of his chair—a great figure, and crossed the room to straighten a Persian painting. He examined with pleasure the small brilliant portrait of Shah Jehan, mounted on his white charger and bearing on his wrist a hooded, sinister falcon. Then he came back. "Well," said he, "and that's that. Now you know I'm doin' for you what's right and proper. 'Tis in my Will, the one I signed last year—and 'twill be the same or better, in the new one Marrindon wants me to make. You won't have to look to Tom—you know what I think about Tom—Lord, I was no saint, but what ever I did came from my heady youth and because life had such a smilin' way. I would never hurt a fly. Tom's got no heart, no bowels, no imagination. I'll see you're made independent of Tom"

The faintness had passed and she pulled herself erect again.

"Very good my lord," came from her in an even voice. "Any orders for the morning?"

"Let 'em know in the country we'll be down for the long week-end. I'm takin' Traquair. You'd better catch the mornin' train. We'll take the motor and arrive in time for tea."

"Do you really need me?" she asked, reluctantly—her father looked at her and nodded. "You need the country air that's what. Your little face is like a ghost. Draw yourself an extra twenty guineas, and buy some new fol-de-rols. 'Course I need you. Won't there be letters? and there's always some bore lyin' in wait for me. Mind you turn your little toes out of bed in time tomorrow!" he commanded, and, murmuring her thanks, the girl made her escape.

When the door closed after her, Heriot settled himself again in his chair, picked up his cigar and let his eyes follow the trail of smoke as it rose.

Odd—but the child had seemed a thought upset by the talk—nervous, agitated. Maybe she felt her position more than he had supposed. The arrangement had seemed so entirely natural and simple to him that he had taken for granted it had seemed equally simple to her. 'Course she'd rather work for him than anyone else and she was far too sensible not to want something to do—as things were. He'd brought her home on a whim—she was good-looking and in little ways reminded him of her mother. More sense, though. And now he liked having her 'round.

Five o'clock struck. Soon Clayton would be bringing in his tea, as Lady Champyon was out of town. In a few minutes Heriot knew that he would hear the

slow, shuffling step of Mr. Cust, who would open the door and shut it carefully after him. Heriot knew perfectly just how his old friend would look and what he would do. He would wear a black suit and a grey striped vest, and his tie was an antique black cravat run through a scarab ring. He would carry his little leather portfolio, go over to his chair, begin to sort the papers in it and make elaborate notes on their margins If he happened to be in a good humor, he would begin a monologue in his squeaky voice which might be quite interesting. If he happened to be in a bad humor, he would say nothing at all.

And this was all there was for one to look forward to! One might have everything life could give, it seemed; wealth, distinction, beauty, adventures, friends—yet he who plants no trees sits under no shade. Only permanent relations counted—relations bound together by nature and kept together by character. For a temperament like his own, the one thing to hold boredom at arm's length was, plainly, a close contact with youth. No doubt this was the reason he had taken so strong a liking to young Traquair.

As for the girl, he'd provide for her handsomely and someday he'd see about getting her a good husband. At the moment he couldn't spare her; she made brightness in the house. But he'd do the right thing by her and 'twas all she could look for, being base-born. Pity, though! There was old Cust coming now.

BOOK II

CHAPTER XIII

TRAMPEN PARK took its name from an ancient tenure by which the original owner had received a grant of just so many acres as he might tramp over from sunrise to sunset. Centuries had diminished the extent of land thus awarded; the first holders had died out and the Kellynches had been in possession since George III. The place had never been especially identified with them. Whins, that rough castle and fortified farmhouse in the Grampians, was the house whence they came and where they looked to return. A Scot is ever a Scot, though he may lord it over half an English county.

More than one house had been erected at Trampen Park; the present building was a whimsical mixture of styles. What remained of the Tudor mansion was hidden from the main approach by a Queen Anne front with Georgian additions in brick with a lighter stone trim. There was a pillared entrance, walls topped with urns and various indeterminate outbuildings whose uses an American could only guess. Inside, it all seemed to Denis inconveniently large, confusing, and not very comfortable. Outside, he yielded gladly to a new, yet ancient, charm. The windows of the older part looked upon a carpet garden and a terrace protected by walls of yew. From this terrace the effect was odd, as though two houses stood back to back. This architectural blunder did not pass without comment in the county histories. They dwelt, however, on the beauti-

ful situation of the mansion, placed on a rise whence the eye fled afar, past groups of rounded trees into blue distances. The garden had delightful corners, where tall lilies gleamed against the hedges, where statues with green shadows dripped into dark basins, where fantastic creatures carved of yew pranced on their standards against the sky. The lawns stretched into a long and sunny slope, fresh with the exuberant emerald of May. There were majestic Dodonian oaks, slender larches, ilexes, amusing sycamores. The rose-garden, not yet in bloom, was held within an outline of espalier apple-trees, looking as if Luini had designed them. Paths through the copse were noisy with birds and led to vistas of smooth fields, soon to be golden with wheat. A thread of smoke showed where the gardener's cottage sheltered itself behind still blossoming hedgerows, while under the trees stood groups of deer and strange black sheep with sharp, twisted horns.

The motor-trip took nearly two hours and Heriot was particularly flavorful all the way down. He talked about his boyhood and youth, describing the influences surrounding these, personal and political, quoting "the blessings of absolute government" and contrasting them with the present; "when sovereignty has passed from the people to the newspapers. . . . !" Denis could see more plainly that, though his individuality must have been full-bodied and picturesque from the very start, with the added vitality of talent, yet this had been heightened by his development during an era when Personality still counted for much in the world. His were the political traditions of a period when the affairs of Europe were notably affected by the inscrutability of Louis Napoleon, the wit of Disraeli, and the mysteriousness of Count Metternich. Thus, for him, the

hieratic sanctities of diplomacy, whose ideal coup was the Suez Canal purchase, represented a standard which the modern "open covenants openly misconducted" (the phrase was Heriot's) simply violated and outraged. Was it remarkable that he should be disgusted by what he termed "our cringeing to the half-civilized"? No: it wasn't remarkable, and Traquair, not agreeing of course, yet couldn't actively define his disagreement, because he felt that he wouldn't have him otherwise. There were so many people of correct views on democracy who were mere dish-wash: and it was so much more important to be Somebody than to be right.

"Have you never thought of diplomacy?" Heriot asked him, and Denis answered no—he should hate a job in which your strings were pulled from a distance by some ignoramus, and what he wanted was a real success at the Bar; with holidays spent in aiding and forwarding the right development of the Silverwater Valley. "There's plenty of excitement there," he told his friend, and Heriot nodded in sympathy, quoting a statesman who had said: "One must find excitement, if one has brains."

Then he began to lay his lighter touch upon the Past and told Denis who it was that had first given him the nickname of "St. Helios." It was Princess Julie Bonaparte, the Marchesa di Roccagiovine, who was the friend and correspondent of Renan and died in Rome in 1900.

"She was years my elder, but I went to her salon as a lad. Sometimes Pauline Metternich-Sandor would run in, but discussions between Renan and Caro on the idea of God were too austere for Pauline. Her *gamineries* shocked the Marchesa. I continued going there for many years—in fact, until she refused to allow a

certain lady—a friend of mine,—to dance in her salon. That broke up the friendship. Beautifully uncharitable those great ladies were, my dear!"

So they sped out the Edgware Road and Watling Street, the long, straight Roman way. Denis observed that his companion marked their entrance into the countryside by substituting a cloth cap for his felt hat and a pipe for his cigar. In the same way he seemed to lay aside the more studied aspects of himself. He became, and remained all that week-end, a direct and out-of-doors Englishman, than whom no nicer creature walks upon this earth. With a kind, easy host, and the quiet of the country after these exciting weeks, Denis looked forward to peace. But no peace waited for Denis at Trampen Park, after he had observed for the first time, standing at the drawing-room door, a slim shape with black hair, in ruffles of primrose tinted organdy and hands full of narcissus. His thought was, "Now I shall have to be thinking about her again!" as his mind stumbled upon this apparition. Why couldn't she have been left in London where she belonged, instead of being there with that dangerous grace? He bowed stiffly and was disturbed. But Heriot was pleased. He called: "That you? Come here. Let's have a look at you!" and then, when the servants who had surrounded them disappeared into the back regions with bags and boxes, he took the girl's ruffled sleeve between his thumb and finger and turned her round appraisingly.

"Very nice," said he in approval; "and something left, I see, out of the twenty guineas, for your little socks. Good!" He released her, smiling; she smiled back; and the likeness in the two faces leapt out at Denis as he looked. The smile passed; employer and employee

stood facing one another. Heriot turned toward the drawing-room, pausing a moment to take a whiff of a bowl of violets, and asked in his usual voice:

"Any letters?"

"None of importance. They are on your desk."

"Naught from Marrindon?"

"No, my lord."

"Humph—you're sure?"

"I couldn't be mistaking his, you know," the secretary answered, and Heriot gave a chuckle.

"No; tisn't likely, I grant. Marrindon," he proceeded to explain, as he led the way to where the kettle was already boiling, "has used for a decade the most astoundin' stationery. As big as the F. O. and a sort of empyrean blue. Everybody in London knows 'em, I fancy. I call 'em his *petit bleu*, but this was to be a *Grand Bleu*, 'cause it is my Will." His tone was perfectly frank; he pushed Traquair into a chair and took another himself, waving Nicole to the seat behind the tea-table. "Amazin' what a bore these gentry are about one's Will. From the fuss Marrindon makes to have money and land go together, you'd suppose he was sure of his job from that heir of mine, who hates him like poison. I love keepin' Marrindon on the gridiron—uncertainty is the life of one's solicitor. Whoof! Now get to work my dear and restore tired nature, 'cause there's a good bit to be showin' Traquair, y' know!"

There was a good bit, and all that lingering, golden afternoon the three rambled happily about together. Stables, gardens, glasshouses, park and pleasance and paddock, all were given their weekly inspection by the tall master of the house. Heriot, pipe in mouth, led the two young people; he let nothing escape notice; he knew the Latin names of his rare plants, the condition of his

grape-vines, the forwardness of his kitchen-garden, the habits of his dogs, horses, pheasants, deer, and odd black sheep. He knew the rhyme which foretold the flooding of the burn in spring-time, the legend which clung around some ancient oak, the corner of the village green where a witch had once been stoned, the tradition that a Druid's blessing kept pure the water shining in the deep well. Gamekeepers, gardeners, foresters and grooms, all came in for kindly interrogation, for searching observation, not only by master of servant, but by one expert of another. This personal thoroughness and care was a revelation to Denis, who began to see how it would counteract the slower rhythm of life and bring results beyond the careless hurry in his own country. He was not above learning, and Heriot listened with a kindly curve of the mouth to his rhapsodies on the subject of the Silverwater Valley. As they passed where spring lilies shone like a cluster of *nebulæ* against the dark yews, or looked down the green gold tunnel upon a new-planted field, or trod on turf which centuries had smoothed and thickened, while the fruit-blossoms showered on them, Denis began to comprehend also how life in these surroundings, sheltered, filled with healthy activities, drawing sustenance from ancient, tranquil beauty, tended to foster individualities like his host's.

Was it these things or the presence of the yellow ruffles which caused this afternoon to remain so vivid in his mind? The tea-table, with its flowers, the girl, a flower herself, seated behind it—while Heriot smiled at her, well-pleased,—Denis could not forget them; nor how, as they walked together, certain likenesses of carriage and movement came more strongly out, father and daughter checked at the same view, turned with the

same gesture, saw the same trifle in the same way. Nicole moved freely, happily; she even spoke with gayety; she appealed to him now and again and her dark eyes were kind.

Oh, it was impossible, Denis felt, that this place should not be her home—she belonged there—they belonged together—they needed one another. Hostility—antagonism—hate? Nonsense! They were mere morbid outcroppings, they had no reality, the truth was wholly other. Wasn't it his task to bring that truth to light? He was filled with zeal to be the God from the machine, to make the *real* tie a *reality*. It must, it should be so, some way, some how. And he? Why, he was of the race that could accomplish anything, he was on the side of the angels.

Then her manner to him seemed to have changed; she was all friendliness; he noticed with a joyful bewilderment that she smiled, she called him by name, she even teased him a little—her father listening indulgently.

"And you still maintain your home is more beautiful than all this?" Nick demanded as they paused, looking out where the lawn sloped into the evening mist.

"It's very different—to me—yes—it's more beautiful."

"But how?"

"Stimulating, where this is restful; young, where this is old; clear, where this is cloudy—."

"Clear—where this is cloudy. . . ." she repeated mockingly . . . and once more he was challenged by her indescribable sidelong glance, full of fire.

This rising of a hope within him burnt like a steady flame. All night a perfumed air came in through his window and he was conscious of the heady fragrance

of May. He rose early from a slumber which seemed particularly light and excited; he dressed quickly; he wanted to hurry down stairs.

As he turned the passage and stood on the first step of the stair, he saw Nicole standing in the hall below. Her white dress, her black hair, shone there to delight him. The post-bag had evidently just been brought to her and she took a number of letters from it. Heriot's unmistakable voice called impatiently to her from an adjoining room and she turned quickly to obey. But not before Denis, standing above, had seen her select one of the letters and conceal it carefully in the bosom of her dress. The envelope was large and of a curious, bright blue.

CHAPTER XIV

“—*Te souvient-il de notre extase ancienne?*

—*Pourquoi voulez-vous donc qu'il m'en souvienne?*”

AT the touch of this incident, Traquair's illusion broke as a bubble breaks. No use to tell himself that he might have been mistaken, that the letter might be her own, that other folk used blue envelopes beside Mr. Marrindon. She was just an adventuress after all.

What a humiliation of disappointment! This situation, into which he had been capriciously projected by Fate, had changed his sympathies turn by turn. He had been first on one side, then on the other. Heriot charmed him, yet he winced at Heriot; Nicole touched him, but now he shrank from Nicole. She wasn't straight. That's what he told himself furiously, setting his teeth—she wasn't straight! He would concern himself on her account no longer—no! He would definitely stand by to protect against her the friend who had been so good to him. This was the end of hopes and dreams. What a fool he had been to imagine he could straighten things out when, as she said, they were crooked before he was born!

Well, he knew now whose side he was on for good that at least ! He slipped out into the garden and walked about to calm himself. A smiling day greeted him, a sky dappled with a flock of little

clouds, but he could not smile back. Mist still shrouded the long, green slopes; he longed suddenly, intensely, for the diamond-bright mornings of home . . . "Clear, not cloudy!" . . . And oh, what clouds now hung over his spirit. Why should he feel such a storm of hurt emotion? Denis could not have told. That, too, lay in clouds. The Gods drop their own veils over the path on which they are about to lead us. Poor Denis!

The day moved forward. He went and came, sat and stood, laughed and was silent. In the morning room the great, flat baskets full of flowers were brought in by the gardener's son, an innocent out of Shakespeare. When Nick greeted the yokel, he mopped and mowed, twisted his peaked cap and grinned admiringly. Traquair was called into service, the girl, in her white dress, moved hither or yon among the mass of blossoms. She was gentle, gracious even, she played at *châtelaine* as though she had forgotten it was only play. Once, he touched her hand: it was smooth and warm. How large and luminous her eyes: their candor hurt him.

He turned aside saying little; she was piqued, then annoyed with herself for feeling pique. Other tentative efforts to please him followed. He found himself struggling against them, sore-hearted, incredulous. This was the first time he had seen her living as a normal girl should live in her father's house; she fluttered in and out, carefree, at ease, radiant. She was plainly happy; it was Traquair who seemed sombre. He tried not to look at her, not to think about her, not to wonder at the arch gayety of a face he had seen tragically distorted with misery and envy. He said to himself, "She has nothing to do with me;" and, when she smiled at him, he repeated, "Nothing to do with me;" and, when she left the room, he stood and stared after

her, desperately reiterating, "Oh God, nothing to do with me!"

Hours moved on. To be in Heriot's house, in Heriot's company, and not be lifted from oneself, was unthinkable. Denis erelong began to recover his spirits, to shake himself from the hypnotism of that blue envelope. He began to be more like the Denis who had travelled so happily down to the country the day before. And, as his nature was, he began to find excuses for the girl once more. After all, wasn't it true what she had said? . . . but oh! it oughn't to have been true!

All the spring day was mild; by night it grew milder still. So softly evening fell that, after dinner, while the twilight slowly withdrew from the sky, Heriot had chairs placed on the terrace outside the drawing-room windows. A new moon made a curved silver thread, so bright one could almost brush it away. Against the clear curtain of horizon, the yew monsters pranced, oaks and larches made dark hollows. From the windows of the house came light, that lay in chequered golden oblongs on the terrace, with a shadow moving swiftly across them, an erect pliant shadow as the girl within moved about the room.

Heriot sank deep in his chair; one saw nothing of his face, only above a white oblong glowed the red spark of his cigar. The younger man, tired by the tumult of his own thoughts, let himself relax, his head resting where he might look back into the room, where he might fill his eyes with the primrose-clad figure and draw dear pain from the sight. Although she dined with them, she had not been asked to join them. Her movements in the room were restless. She sat a few minutes at the piano; she crossed the floor to a cabinet, unlocked it and began to set in order the collection of netsukés and

other small ivories it contained. She closed the cabinet, got a book, sat under the lamp to read. Did she feel the eyes that watched, watched, through the window? Maybe she did; for, after a moment, she laid down her book rose and hurried from the room. The curtain, stirred with her passing, fell motionless again.

Then Denis drew his breath in a deep unconscious sigh, and Heriot's voice answered out of the dusk:

"Don't ever do that, my lad!" he said, and his cigar-end moved in the direction of the unconscious girl.

"Sir?" said Traquair, startled.

"Oh, in the beginning, I know—'tis all a miracle—" the deep voice mused—"the one thing that counts is to be together marriage, 'tis just an excuse, you feel—a tie for the weak what does it mean to you that you can't marry? Your tie is there, in the meeting of your two hearts and the irresistible tumult of the blood—oh, I know! What'd I think about marriage when I met that child's mother?"

"Oh," Denis asked pitifully, "was she beautiful? Was she like—Nicole?"

The young voice, thrilled with sympathy, unlocked Heriot. He began to talk. His tone was both unctuous and resonant; between moving pauses the words streamed out of the shadow where he sat, words which disdained the thinness of restraint, which painted the past in all its fiery and vivid memories.

"Was she beautiful? Oh, my dear! 'the turn of her hips was a necklace carved from the hand of a master—'! She was fire and honey—when she moved, it was a panther moving, and when she looked—I saw her great, grave eyes like a stag's. We had eight years together—eight years! The first six were like six days—the six days of creation—a new heaven and a new

earth and she and I in the midst of them. The boy came, then this girl—they were gifts of pure joy. They had ivory faces and thick black lashes. They were flowers in the garden—I never bothered about 'em. Oh, yes, I'd have married her had she been free but there was a husband, Grannet, y'know—in Spain or somewhere. We never did anything about him or a divorce. Why should we? I always felt 'twas too fierce, too exquisite to last. Then she got the notion—after that row in the States—about interferin' with my career she wept then. But we had those years till the boy died. He'd been 'like an embodied joy whose race is just begun,' and when she showed him to me, poor little chap, then for the first time I wondered. Because I realized that 'twas better for him, and easier—to lie smiling there as he was. And afterwards? Oh, my dear—don't you see? The American affair was a blow and I won't deny I showed bitterness. Who ever wants to pay the price of his pleasures? I was proud always. I was gettin' restive, too. We quarrelled upon it and she left me. At first, though it hurt, yet it seemed release. There was the wide world, I thought, with no doubt other women—and the boy was dead, which broke one chain she held me by. Then I went mad and looked upon the thing as it was! I had the habit of her dear self and couldn't break it I'd forgotten—I'd forgotten I was near meridian . . . I couldn't go back to my youth. Other men had strong sons at school. And after her—what were other women to me?—Pale shadows.

“‘For I was desolate and sick of an old passion—When I awoke and found the dawn was gray-’

“My God, my dear, I went to sleep night after night with wet eyes, lacking her!”

How his passion swept him into the terms of poetry! How the moving voice expressed them! Denis was breathless.

" But we had those years. . . . Did you ever see the Sainte Chapelle, my dear? I think the angels gave their wings to make it. When Nicolette saw it, she crossed herself more than once. That night she danced "pour le Bon Dieu" and the Parisians went so mad I'd the pleasure of pricking one of 'em in the arm next morning in the Bois. 'Twas a chilly dawn; I didn't hurt him much, and, if he was pale, 'twas from jealousy when he saw her weeping in my arms. What days my dear what days!"

His voice lingered, mused, and ceased. His long shape lay silent in the dark After a while Denis said quietly:

"And then?"

"Suffering my boy, only suffering, and life to remake. Was it strange, I say, I began to wonder? And I wondered more when I found I had lost desire and freedom was no more to me than a wider prison, a longer chain. The War took one's mind off for awhile I had no son of my body to send. I sent off such children of the spirit as I could rear and I'm glad I did.

" Meanwhile, this girl had turned up. She fainted there in my hall like any waif and stray—and d'you know, when I looked down on her face, it was white and the long, black lashes swept her cheek just like my little dead George's. From that moment, I didn't wonder—I knew! 'Twasn't I that paid for those years; she paid. . . . Don't ever do it, my dear. Remember her! There she is: handsome, well-bred, my blood in her veins. . . . Yes: I'm keepin' her under

my roof, no matter what people say—you know how they yelp and chatter. I'll leave her some money and that land in your country. She'll have to be content, I suppose, to live retired somewhere out of England. 'Course, she can't hope to enter the great world. The bar sinister is the bar to everything."

He stopped. Denis saw a chance and took it. His pulses beat, beat with excitement.

"Aren't there ways, though, of lifting that bar?" He spoke with diffidence yet needed not. Heriot had the illusory frankness of a self-centered, literary nature, which at the moment was in full current of openness.

"Not with us. In Scotland, in my country, the marriage of parents may legitimize their child, or the King can issue letters of legitimation. That's been done, Marrindon tells me. But nothing would enable the girl to succeed to the title and estates it cannot be."

"Adoption, perhaps?"

"Adoption isn't recognized under the laws of England. I looked into it once when little George was born. There's nothing in it—for her. Why mark the poor child forever, if she gets no good by it?"

His answers showed such a thoughtful misconception, Denis longed to cry at him that the girl was marked already, perhaps with a more shameful brand yet he restrained himself. Here was a moment he must not lose, when he could walk silently, step by step, beside the other's mind, when he should be *there*.

"No!" Heriot shifted his position and answered his own question. "No; she must be content, the lassie. A new country; a fine property. Some money too, of

course, though Marrindon holds most of mine must go with the name to that brute, Tom."

"I fear," Denis rejoined, with professional steadiness, "that Miss Grannet will never go to the States."

"She has confided in you?" the elder asked surprised.

"Indirectly. She knows why the land has been acquired."

"And you think she doesn't want it?"

"How can she want exile? Hasn't she lived in sight and touch of your world? Isn't she fitted for it? Hasn't she beauty, finish, spirit?—Doesn't she love power and great place?"

"A chip of the old block," Nick's father commented, more sorrowfully than boastfully.

Denis's voice had warmed. "She's your daughter—you're not like everybody. Wouldn't you feel it bitterly?"

"No doubt, my dear; but these things are."

The phrase was one which Denis felt himself equipped to understand; he dropped his deference, he spoke out.

"These things are and we must look at them as they are. A man might carve his way in a new country where the world is open to ability. But this young woman—You've only to look at her to see she's not the business type. She's lovely. She wants honor, affection, cherishing."

"You're an ardent young Quixote," Heriot remarked, in whom Denis's tone had once more aroused a touch of the grand manner.

"I have two sisters."

The older man turned in his chair and stared at the firm concentrated face. His voice hardened upon a colder note.

"What's done 's done can't change the law I'll provide for her, but she can't be Viscountess Heriot."

He was tired. Emotion having passed, the old authority returned, the manner of one who does not expect to be differed with. Denis felt the change of tone; he waited, Heriot said,

"I'll see she pays my bill no more."

"Then you'll send her away, sir?"

The other made a movement of sudden haughty withdrawal and Denis saw it. Denis didn't want him to repent his confidence; he was careful to keep his own voice light and even.

"It's hard, sir, don't you think? for people to live in constant touch with what they can't have; it makes a strain And everybody," Denis added, with a note of pride and affection, "everybody doesn't know—as I do, you know—how wonderful you are!"

But Heriot said nothing.

CHAPTER XV

THE village at the park gates was in no way what Traquair had expected: there was not a thatched roof in it from one end to the other, and indeed nothing in or near Trampen Park was half so picturesque as the character of its owner. St. Helier's consisted in two rows of houses on either side of the main highway,—built of black slate, grim, grimy and dull, with a few shops among them, the butcher's, the baker's, the candlestick maker's, to supply the grim, grimy, dull people who dwelt behind closed shutters or window shades pulled down. Northward, upon the road, poured a stream of thundering traffic, surveyed by the inhabitants in an apathetic dislike. The ornamental iron gates of the park, which were kept shut, opened in the midst of this highway, and the only breaks in the monotonous line of buildings came at either end. On the north, the church, and on the south, the inn, occupied widened spaces which showed a little green. The church was modern. The yard in front of it held standard rose-bushes and wreaths of wax flowers protected by globes of glass. Forming an L around its entrance-court, the Heriot Arms still presented a faintly eighteenth century effect of balconies, small paned windows, walls of black and red brick alternating, and signs appropriately lettered. A garage occupied the place of the old stables, while the show of window boxes had dwindled to a few geraniums and a hardy ivy-plant or two.

On the Monday of Traquair's visit, a gentleman, driving his own car, turned in at the Heriot Arms about three of the afternoon. He was received with deference, if not enthusiasm, which his curt, not to say ungracious, manner made comprehensible. St. Helier's, in its sullen way, was proud of its lord; he was somebody even in the great world, he was glorious of bearing, and, if impatient, yet kind-hearted withal. But St. Helier's labored under no illusion respecting his heir, who was accepted as a necessary evil and whose rare appearances were taken on sufferance to which he was typically indifferent. On this occasion, Major Kellynch merely left his car at the inn, to set out immediately on foot. As he walked along the village street, the butcher saw him and stared above his cleaver:

"Black Tom'll be wanting money from his lordship, I'm thinking" was his shrewd reflection. The doctor saw him and took off his hat, delaying his own departure in the single-seater long enough to note whether Major Kellynch stopped to enter the Park gates. Not this time: in fact, the active figure, walking fast, soon passed the village limits, took a rutted lane up the hill between high hedges, and continued on till he reached the southern boundary of the Park. Here a diagonal path, coming from the direction of the Great House, crossed the lane by means of two stiles, on one of which he seated himself. Glancing around him with some particularity, Major Kellynch refreshed himself with a smoke, and occupied the time by slicing the heads of nearby dandelions with his stick, as if each one was a golf-ball on its tee. He did not have long to wait.

Presently on the path appeared the form of a young lady, dressed in fresh, crisp, primrose tinted stuff, which

accorded well with the gayety of sunshine. She wore no hat, the bronze tints glowed in the coils of her dark hair, and Major Kellynch observed as he had done before, that she was undeniably attractive. He made this concession grudgingly, coupling it with the unspoken comment that she was, however, not his sort. As she drew near, he stood up, but he did not fail to note with some concealed irritation that, though she saw him and nodded smiling, she did not hasten her pace.

A moment or two therefore, was occupied by her approach over the curve of the hill, and it was perhaps significant, both of their natures and of their relation, that during that moment neither of the pair drew any pleasure from the lovely day nor from the setting to their tryst. Major Kellynch had destroyed all the flowers which lay within his reach; his occupancy of the bank was marked by slain dandelions; and the primrose-tinted frock, as it drew near, gave his eye no more refreshment than they had done. Nor did the blossoms falling on the grass today, which yesterday had shone in snowy perfection, bring any warning to his advancing companion.

"I'm a little late," Miss Grannet remarked, climbing the stile and seating herself thereon, after carefully brushing off the step with her handkerchief. "But there were guests at luncheon and I couldn't manage to leave."

"Well, I came as soon as I had your note," Major Kellynch said, seating himself on the bank nearby. "Uncle Ian, as usual, didn't deign to answer my letter. I thought so plain a proposition would draw even his attention. I take it you've no specially good news for me?"

"Nothing especially good," she frankly replied. "He

didn't read your letter through. He simply remarked that a financial scheme with you in it didn't tempt him, and that you'd had nearly £2,500 out of him this last year, as it was. And that's true, you know, Major Tom."

The person addressed was well accustomed to control his expression and it had been many years since he had allowed his feelings to affect in any degree his face or voice. All he did therefore was to look unpleasantly at the nearest dandelion.

"Very good of him, I'm sure—he's flowery enough to others and throws his money away on wild-cat American schemes, but he'd not help me Whose fault is it, after all, that I have to try the city? And what's £5,000 a year to him——? With half a million pounds!"

Miss Grannet was used to remarks like this and made no comment.

"It's a pity" she said, "that you don't seem to be able to get on his right side. Sometimes I think you don't try hard enough."

"Well, I never claimed to be one of these lit'ry chaps," Lord Heriot's heir somewhat sullenly admitted. "I did use to try—on sports we ain't so bad—but there was a mess with a bookie over one of his horses—he was savage about that. And there were other things before then. Lord! He's kept me hard up all my life—how'm I to blame? When it comes to talking I don't know this poetry and all——" he shot his companion suddenly an ugly glance. "Truth is, I hate the old boy's airs and graces and the fuss that's made over him. I can't stand him, any more than you can yourself. Pretty rotten the way he's treated you, y' know——!"

Nicole made no answer; her fingers, interlaced in her lap, stiffened and Kellynch, after a pause to let her speak, went on:

"So you think there's no chance he'd go on the prospectus?"

"I'm afraid not;" she corrected herself, "I'm sure not."

"Well, of course, that ends that," Major Kellynch remarked gloomily. "'Tisn't me those chaps want,—it's Uncle Ian. His name and all; they'd raise my allotment just for that. And I led 'em to think he'd do it, too that was because I relied on you."

His tone annoyed her. "Personally, I never believe," she observed coolly, "in pushing a lost cause. It only injures my own position. And, as you have often reminded me, I have to look out for myself."

Although not especially a perspicacious person, Tom Kellynch recognized that the conversation was taking an unfavorable drift. He recalled that he had recommended himself to the secretary in the beginning of their acquaintance, by a certain judicious admixture of flattery and sympathy. Very early he had jumped to the correct conclusion as to who she was, although he had never taken the trouble to deny current gossip, and had allowed villainous remarks to be made about her at his Club without bothering to offer even a shade of dissent—even during the time when she was pushing his interests with his uncle—yet in her presence he had ever maintained the attitude of admiring loyalty. He saw that what at once appealed to her was the fact that they were both in a position of antagonism toward a harsh world. The fact that Major Kellynch had earned the world's antagonism, Nick, in her young craving for friendship, had forgotten or overlooked. He gave

her his version and she was blind to start with. She couldn't like the man, but she thought him ill-treated, and that was enough. At one time, she tried to tell herself that underneath his coarse manner he was a loyal friend. Lately, she had not been so sure. Echoes had reached her of lies told in his presence which he had not troubled to refute, nor could she help contrasting his indifferent selfishness with Mr. Traquair's ardent, if meddlesome, championship of Lord Heriot. But Nicole had been too long dominated by a fixed idea to see clearly, to exercise her good natural judgement. Therefore, after her last remark, when he began to placate her, she showed herself willing to be placated.

"Of course you must," he warmly agreed, "after all you've done for me, I'd never have you lose. I'll have to manage somehow. The world's a hard place for folks in a false position, like you and me, you know." He paused.

"Well, one thing is good," said she, not abating the distance of her manner. "You remember I told you about his Will, that I feared he was going to leave the money away from the estate?"

"You did, but I can't believe it. He couldn't be such a bounder," he fervently declared, but looked anxious when she shook her head.

"He got Marrindon to draw it up that way," she told him quietly. "I saw it. I'm to have the American land and a rather small income. But you get not one penny that he can help."

"That's a nice thing; isn't it!" said Kellynch when he could speak. "How can you say that's good? If it's true, it's ruin. Being Heriot and St. Helier's without money, means ruin."

"Oh, but he didn't sign it," said she. "It's torn up."

"He didn't sign it—but how did that happen?"

She waited a moment, looking down.

"It didn't reach him at once and, after a day or so, when it did, he had changed his mind." There eyes met.

"You angel!" Kellynch said and Nick flushed, though not with pleasure.

"You see, I don't like the States," she explained. "I prefer Mayfair. But I ought to warn you that I don't think he means in any event to leave it to you."

"To whom, then?"

"I think now he's quite likely to leave it to me."

Major Tom gave vent to an unpleasant laugh.

"Rather hard that on the legitimate heir, it seems to me."

The tone did not escape her, but it was as nothing in view of the end she had set herself. A grievance places blinders over the mind's eyes, and everything of significance in the speech and behavior of this man was out of her sight for the moment. She looked to, she listened, only to herself.

"I was wondering" she said, "if, in that case, matters were not possible to arrange——?"

"How?"

Evidently he didn't understand, although he was an intelligent man in many ways. Also, he had learned in life that it is always well to let the other person fully explain and commit himself. It is also true that he did not go further, in his own perception, than to suppose she meant some sort of social sponsorship. He continued to stand, switching his stick, and looking

half sulky, half puzzled. Nicole re-arranged herself upon the stile and spoke without glancing at him.

"Fate seems to be playing such odd tricks with you and me," she remarked, meditatively. "You are likely to have a great name and no money; I, to have a great deal of money and no name to speak of! I shall be the rich Miss Nobody, and you the poor Lord Nothing."

He struck his stick deep into the earth, as with the force of this observation.

"By Jove," he cried, "it's just that! By Jove, it's an infernal shame! They ought to go together!"

"That's what I think."

To be sure that he understood her aright, Major Kellynch made a step nearer: an odd smile flickered into his face. "Well, well!" he said, and again: "By Jove! I think this takes smoke d' you know?" He slapped his pockets and produced his cigarette case. When he had his cigarette burning, he spoke again over it. "Do I understand," he said lightly, "that you are proposing marriage?"

"What I am proposing," the girl answered steadily, "is an offensive and defensive alliance." She paused a minute as if to gather her thoughts together. "What I mean, Major Tom, is just this. Over Lord Heriot's mind I have much more influence than I had a year ago. He's beginning to realize that I'll never consent to go off to America, and settle there for the purpose of saving his post-mortem reputation. He knows that it is I, not you, who should by rights be Heriot and St. Helier's. This American, Mr. Traquair, has been talking to him, I think. Anyhow, anyway, I am certain that he has almost decided to leave me his fortune. But even if he does, I still consider myself defrauded, you know."

"Not so much as I am," he grumbled.

"Perhaps not Of course, with so large a fortune, I ought to be able to buy a title," she proceeded, in a voice so cool and a manner so considering that Major Kellynch could not but feel a certain admiration, "but there's only one title I happen to want: my own. In the same way, with your great name, you ought to be able to marry money; but there are not so many heiresses as there were, who will overlook certain things, are there? You've not been able to pull it off so far, although I know you've tried."

"There's always been this cursed uncertainty about Uncle Ian," he muttered.

"Quite so: and it's more an uncertainty today than ever. I never myself had the faintest hope before of any such thing. Until this week I regarded his signing that will as settled. Now Marrindon is to draw up another and I shall have plenty of chance. It seems as though you and I ought to have something to exchange."

She paused and rose.

"You've got a head on your shoulders and I don't deny it," her companion agreed. "I see your point—about myself. I shall have to turn what you've told me over in my head. I ain't a marrying man,—and besides—there's many a slip and one can't tell anything about Uncle Ian. I shall have to be pretty sure about the will and everything—before I let myself in"

"Oh, there's no hurry," Nick assured him, and unquestionably her poise, her steady eye, the tranquillity of her manner under the circumstances, had their effect on Major Kellynch. He couldn't deny that she was handsome—not the kind to hamper him with sentiment—and then, a cool half-million pounds! Really, it

meant far more coming in that way than under the succession laws with their taxes, death duties and so on. Still he must be careful, he mustn't be taken unawares.

As Nicole crossed the park again, she turned on the path just ere she entered the wood and gazed back on the lane where a man was briskly walking toward the village. The sight caused a black exultation to rise in her! the purpose long planned was all but accomplished. She knew that, notwithstanding his caution, she had caught him. The chance was one that he would never let pass. Yes: the cards were in her hands, she need only play her game. She saw herself Lady Heriot and St. Heliers Yet she knew, as she looked back upon the figure of Tom Kellynch, that the mere thought of living beside such an one in the intimacy of marriage was a thought of horror.

CHAPTER XVI

A BIRD SANG in the copse behind her all the way home. The irregular, insistent notes distracted her thoughts, pulling them away from a satisfaction she wanted to feel at having taken so long a step toward the purpose she had set herself. But the small, fluting music mocked all such purposes, and, indeed, as Nick hurried through the woods, she became aware that the face of Nature was set against her. Nature had another call for her in the radiance of May.

"Why, why?" urged the bird-song and the stir of leaf and life. "Why scheme and plot for ends whose uses must remain doubtful and hidden?" Grievance and revenge are poor companions for the soul, and to present Destiny with one's account is often to invite payment in strange coin. Life is very sweet and wholesome, provided one does not look too far forward or too far back. Watch us: who build a new miracle in the miracle of each new May, alike forgetful of the dung-heap from which we sprang and the storm which shall inevitably destroy us. Live, then, for the sake of life, as we do; ask not whence it comes nor where it goes; the structure is in your hand."

But Nicole was not in a mood to learn from this genial fatalism of Nature.

The path ended at a gate, which gave upon the lawn some distance below the terrace. Nicole had hoped to slip unperceived into the house, but, when she stepped

out of the shade of the wood, the quartet seated on the terrace caught sight of her, and one of them, Heriot, waved her to approach. She came across the grass slowly, beholding the four figures: the two tall elder men with their cigars; Lady Champyon, in white, erect, alert, her sunshade lying across her lap; the young American seated a little in the background. This younger man it was who watched her grave advance and watched also the expression of Lord Heriot as she drew near. No mistaking that expression—Denis had seen it too often on his own father's face—it was one of pleased, paternal pride.

Isabel Champyon saw the same look and felt annoyance: Wroxeter felt amusement, tinged with pity, which his natural cynicism could not keep from his friendly heart. "All the same" (his thoughts probably ran, behind the tranquil eye and the unsmiling, reddish moustache) "I wish he wouldn't, for Bell is like to make him pay and the girl too." But Heriot had no intention of letting Nick get by the group. As she paused uncertainly a few feet away, his gesture indicated an empty basket-chair and she had no choice but to accept. He smiled on her, for he was indeed in high good humor and proceeded with his teasing talk, like an eager boy.

"Her divorce? Oh, Wroxeter'll tell you the details—he's the true, the blushful hypocrite and he's in correspondence with all the co-respondents in Europe!"

Lord Wroxeter twinkled—but a sort of inward twinkle. He took up the tale: "We met in the Burlington Arcade—she was covered with patchouli—simply reekin', and she'd run to fat in all the wrong spots."

"No woman," interjected Lady Champyon seriously, "ever grows fat in the right place."

"I'd have felt it me duty to stop and urge upon her a better and a purer life, only I was goin' on to tea and hadn't time to lose her on the way."

Nick, still hoping for a chance to withdraw, moved restlessly as the tea-wagon made its appearance. To her, as to Traquair, it seemed plain that Heriot had intended her to act as hostess; he made a gesture toward her chair; but not in time. Isabel Champyon, with a touch of her left hand, swung the whole equipage towards herself and brought it to a stand there. In another instant, she had lifted the tea-pot. It was gracefully, it was smilingly done; there was no offense in it—unless it were an offense to keep her head turned away from the yellow dress—but it caused a little chill to fall over the group. Lady Champyon, however, was far too skillful to let the pause continue. While her careful hands moved among the old silver, she went on in her low, agreeable voice to satisfy the American's curiosity concerning the friendly ghost that used to haunt the Abbey, her childhood's home.

"Seen a ghost? Of course I have. Don't you have them in your houses out there? I'm always so amused when people ask me if I'm afraid of ghosts—our's was as much a member of the household as the dog or the cat! The place had been a monastery; Henry VIII dispossessed it, and gave it, after the divorce, to Anne of Cleves. So we always called her Anne of Cleves. Oh, of course, I saw her—often. She wore a dark dress, long and full, with a white wimple and a crucifix. She had a pained, bewildered, pale face. Mostly we came upon her in the passages. Once, during a tennis-match, she stood at the edge of the Court under the trees and one of the men asked me: 'Who is the lady in

fancy-dress over there?' I had to tell him it was Anne of Cleves."

"Did he believe you?" Mr. Traquair asked, fascinated by the manner, as by the matter of this story.

"Why, of course!" she replied to his surprise, "They had one themselves, only a much nastier one! Well, I remember a winter night my mother and I sat by the fire at one end of the long drawing-room, when suddenly the doors were flung wide, bang! and somebody rushed through the room. I can see Mamma now, drawing her shawl closer," Lady Champyon added pensively, "and saying. 'Do close the doors, darling; Anne of Cleves always leaves them open.'"

There was no trace of irony in her face and Denis felt a strange thrill of being very far from home.

"And she still hangs 'round like that: Anne of Cleves?" he heard himself inquiring, as if the tale were serious.

"Oh, no! You see she wasn't Anne of Cleves after all. We were misled, it seems, and it came out in a very odd way. There was an outbreak of illness—diphtheria—we had to have the drains up. Under the flags, just outside the old cloister, they found the bones of a woman. She'd been buried beyond the consecrated ground, not in a coffin or anything, but just jumbled into a heap. She must have been a great sinner, you see. She'd been done away with, evidently. So then it was all plain."

"All plain?" Denis echoed, unbelieving.

"Why, yes. She walked," Lady Champyon told him, and evidently it was all plain to *her*, "because she was not properly buried in consecrated ground. So we sent for the vicar and had the special service for such cases—for spirits that walk, you know; and it must

have been perfectly satisfactory, 'cause we never saw her again."

"I remember," put in Lord Wroxeter, with interest, and it needed another, low-voiced, well dressed, apparently sane contributor to the conversation to complete the American's bewilderment. "Cornwallis told me about it at the time; there was some difficulty gettin' the right formula, wasn't there now? They had to have an exorcism, if I recall, and 't isn't often done?"

"Yes, Papa had several of the clergy down from London. It made quite a stir, our finding her did. There hadn't been a case of exorcism since 1710, and the need for that service doesn't often occur nowadays."

"Need for that service—doesn't often occur!" Denis chased these phrases, so quietly uttered, through his own unreceptive brain. "And they keep saying we're alike!" was his conclusion. Aloud, he thought best merely to offer, "That's the most wonderful story I ever heard—and the way you tell it!" with glowing eyes. Heriot was smiling, and Lady Champyon began to understand why her old friend liked this stranger. So she went on:

"'Tis interesting, I think, myself, because these cases are rare. She must have been a nun, they think, and what we took for Anne of Cleves was just the religious habit—which was the same as Anne wore in our picture of her. I'm afraid that monastery was a shocking place. Poor thing! I'm glad she rests in peace."

During the talk Nicole had remained seated in the chair drawn next her father's, alert yet passive, in the group, yet never of it. She had been greeted by Wroxeter with courtesy, by Denis with a sensitive flash of consciousness, by Heriot with a gratified smile,

by Lady Champyon with the merest nod. The latter's manipulation of the tea-wagon did not of course escape her, but it was in no sense unexpected. The ghost-narrative tickled the girl's sense of humor and the picturesque: it was so comical to see Mr. Traquair's look. Her reserved young mouth relaxed into amusement, particularly when her father's glowing blue eyes turned toward her for sympathy, showing that he saw it too.

Then Wroxeter, glancing at his watch, remarked on the time, and he and his host rose together and strolled to the end of the terrace. They left an ill-assorted group of three. Nick wanted to follow, but hesitated to disturb Lady Champyon. Immediately she found the young man directly appealing to her, directly bringing her into the conversation. Apparently he did not see, or did not wish to see, how scrupulously the elder lady kept her face turned aside.

"What I've been telling Miss Grannet," Traquair persisted on his theme, which was that of English hospitality, "is that you seem to hide your good points whenever you can in the United Kingdom. At home, we're proud of, we boast of, our hospitality; you cover your's as though you were ashamed of it!"

"That depends," Lady Champyon responded, a shade doubtfully, "I've never been in America myself, but I fancy that our's is hospitality with a difference."

"I don't see it," Denis protested stoutly; "the manner's different, perhaps. Mind you, I'm not running down my own country. I think we're pretty warm-hearted, don't you, Miss Grannet?"

He was making so strong an effort to put her at ease, to give her a place in the talk, and it seemed a pity to reply as Nick, however, promptly did; that during her life in the States she had not found people

particularly warm-hearted, that, indeed, she thought them honester and pleasanter in England. Her remark brought a tinge of color to Lady Champyon's cheek and a hard gleam to her eyes. To her, it was just as if one should hear the German Commander-in-Chief say he much preferred France; it was the triumphant satisfaction of the buccaneer.

"Naturally, I believe in hospitality," she observed, still directly addressing Denis. "Aren't we told to be kind to the stranger within our gates? But I do not believe in throwing down all the barriers and in admitting all the outsiders. I'm for keeping 'em in their place."

"But their place may change," he objected.

"Never really—at least not in this country. People ought to stay where they belong."

"In the Outer Ward," Nicole murmured.

"Precisely." This time there was no mistaking the speaker's meaning; her inflection was pointed and direct. The handsome face was cold. "To me, there is nothing more degrading than the struggle which one sees made by these adventurers, mostly women of unfortunate antecedents or character, who try to force their way into society by using their arts over men. Of course, all right-thinking folk abhor them, but they do it for power. There are women who love power," she concluded significantly and smiled upon Denis.

"There are. Especially those who have power and abuse it."

Lady Champyon started: her color deepened. She had not expected any retort, much less a hit so palpable. Mr. Traquair kept his eyes on her face. He looked a great deal older.

"Ah, you champion the outsider, then?" she asked.

"Certainly, if he is put there by no fault of his own. The first duty of the insider, it seems to me, is to determine whose responsibility it is that keeps him on the outside."

"His first duty or her first duty is to keep her own order inviolable," said Lady Champyon shortly. "You don't understand our world, Mr. Traquair. Surely, my car is there?"

"I neither understand cruelty nor excuse it, Lady Champyon. Here comes Lord Wroxeter, so I suppose it is there."

It was peculiarly disappointing, the elder lady decided, while she sat in quiet talk with her friend on the way home, to find this quick young stranger so independent! Everybody knows that it is the regrettable habit of Americans to form their own opinions on social questions rather than to accept those which have been formed for them by an elder and wiser civilization; but in this particular case, it was such a pity! One ought to have been able to count upon him as an ally.

"Americans are very touchy, aren't they?" she asked Lord Wroxeter.

"Are they?"

"One would think they'd be anxious to learn from us—wouldn't one? But this boy seemed to have it all cut and dried, it's so unfortunate," she lamented. "I must say I'm disappointed in him. Heriot's new friends are hardly an addition these days. I don't suppose one could speak to him about it?"

"No: I don't suppose one could."

There was nothing more final than Lord Wroxeter's answer; nothing more non-committal than his regular, formal face. Long since, he had made up his mind wild horses should not drag from him any direct ref-

erence to the young lady in the primrose frills. "Mind your own business" was the first commandment in the code of his caste. But he was an able man of the world, tolerant, travelled, clever and kind. He appreciated Heriot and admired him, believing him to embody those qualities, which, though a trifle over-colored, constituted the ideal standard of an aristocrat. Danger to his friend, which he apprehended as we know, meant danger to the order itself, meant danger to the ideal. Therefore, because he was clever and loyal, he was glad now to remember that he had made the effort and said to Heriot, half-an-hour before, as they strolled back along the terrace: "I'm afraid, my dear chap, that Bell has her claws sharpened for the lady there."

Even without this warning, however, Heriot would have seen something amiss with the group. He only heard the last few words, but he could not fail to see Lady Champyon's stiff look, the fire in Denis's eyes, Nick's downcast face and bitten underlip. He read these aright and hated what he read. Not by accident, he laid an affectionate arm on the young man's shoulder and was half-leaning on it, when the motor moved down the drive out of sight.

Lord Heriot's mood was silent that last evening at Trampen Park; the flow of his conversation seemed to dwindle and lose itself in the morasses of his thought. He sat in his chair with a book, but there were pictures that came between him and his page. The Sainte-Chapelle and the touch on his arm of Nicolette's hand; that cold duel in the dawn; a small, black-eyed boy with his baby sister in his arms, trying not to cry, though her fists were full of his curls; the pitiful kindred face of the child who fell at his feet; her look, her appeal, when she raised her eyes to him Nick had tried

not to look at her father as he drew near on the terrace, but somehow he was reminded. He closed his book; he felt old again, while for weeks past Denis had made him feel young.

Nicole, too, was thoughtful. To be defended was a new sensation; she wasn't sure she wanted it. Like the bird-song in the woods, it was a teasing, distracting influence.

When, for the first time, she found a chance to speak to Traquair alone, she turned to him with eye-brows quizzically lifted.

"You've been horribly indiscreet, I fear!" she told him, shaking her black head. "You've made an enemy of Lady Champyon and a dangerous one. She's one of Lord Heriot's oldest and closest friends."

Denis looked at her, but in silence.

"Just the same," the girl added, and her voice was not so firm as usual, "thank you—it—it never happened before."

She tendered him her hand and for an instant he was too surprised to take it. Then he did, suddenly.

"Oh, that's all right," he said awkwardly turning his head away. She had never seen him awkward before and his grip had squeezed the ring into her fingers.

CHAPTER XVII

Two years before, on Nicole's first coming to London, there had been some difficulty in finding her a suitable place to live. With the paradoxical attitude toward their relation which was so characteristic, Lord Heriot had insisted that she dwell reasonably near to Berkeley Square, among surroundings where no curiosity would be exhibited towards himself and his affairs. Mr. Marrindon was appealed to; with the result that, after a space of negotiation, Nick found herself provided with lodgings in one of the smaller streets running out of Shepherd's Market. The house was old fashioned and neat, of red and black brick, with small-paned windows; it was one of those belonging to Lord Heriot's London property, which had been leased for many years to an old woman who had once been housekeeper at Trampen Park. Mrs. Madden saw no reason why she should be asked to accompany her acceptance of the young lady as tenant of her best rooms, with the promise that she take no other lodgers during the tenancy. Moreover she was the type of person who does not readily change her ways and who tends to oppose the whims of her betters with respectful inertia. Such opposition is usually successful but it was not in this case. It took a great many interviews between the pair—Marrindon, insistent and authoritative, tapping his eye-glasses on his forefinger while he crossed and uncrossed his legs; Madden, in her respec-

able black and her respectful voice, with her air of plump immoveability—to come to terms at all. Mar-rindon had his way in the end, for the reason that, as he said, “Mrs. Madden could not afford to disoblige his Lordship,” and because she gradually realized the advantage of a financial permanency over the “temporaries” of past seasons. The rooms, therefore, became Miss Grannet’s on the terms agreed that she was to remain the only lodger.

They were comfortable rooms enough, on the usual plan; sitting-room and bed-room adjoining, with a queer little bathroom tucked into a corner up a crooked stair. Madden kept them in shining neatness. Breakfast was served Miss Grannet; dinner only if she gave plenty of notice; luncheon she was supposed to find herself. In the central situation and privacy, in the cleanly care of her little chambers, Nick felt the advantages; but there is no question that she felt the disadvantages as well. Mrs. Madden resented the fact that she had been obliged to give in as regards this lodger and disliked her for it. Belonging to a certain class, she put the simplest and most direct construction on the whole affair. Either the girl was a “person” or she was a bastard; in neither case should Madden have been asked to make concessions on her account. The gentry were all very well; they were necessary, though not so necessary as they had been; but the half-gentry were merely a nuisance, having no power with which to reward the faithful. Mrs. Madden, in regard to her lodger, kept her agreement and did her duty, neither more nor less. She was not an ill-natured woman, but she was determined not to be put upon. The tired girl, returning from her work, never met a welcoming or friendly look; the stiff, little rooms may have worn

the aspect of a refuge, never that of a home. That March when Nick had the influenza, Madden didn't hesitate to point out she had not bargained for illness, and the girl in her weakness had best betake herself to a nursing-home. That slow, cold hostility of a class to whom respectability is religion—Nick was made to feel the chill of it every day she lived.

Now Madden was human and toward what she understood she was often moved with kindness. Had Nick come to her in the ordinary way of business, Madden might easily have taken a liking to her: she was quiet and gave no trouble, though she was "silent-like." But she had come, as it were, rubricated; Mr. Marrindon, by the mere terms of his demand, emphasized her situation; from Madden's point-of-view her lodger was finally set into a definite class. And this class, in Nick's own phrase, was in the Outer Ward. When Nick closed the little front door behind her in the evening, the walls of the Outer Ward rose gigantically around her to shut out the sun.

At Trampen Park, she was apt to be happier: the walls were lower there; she had been accepted as a part of the regular household. She was glad to avail herself of Heriot's careless permission to stay on a day or two, after he and his guest had returned to town. Brilliant weather favored her holiday. She spent it rambling in woods and fields, gazing up into the branches where the new foliage made a cloud of gold and green against blue. She rested, but only physically. Mentally and nervously she was conscious of crisis. Her pulses were strangely quickened, her imagination continually summoned before her the scene on the terrace and the fiery eyes and tense face of the man who had come to her defence.

Nick laughed to herself, tremulously cynical: defence was such a novelty! She kept foolishly reiterating: "Oh, he'll soon drop that!"

Other moments, other scenes began to rise: the dreadful struggle in the water years ago; Heriot standing over her, white-faced with moved eyes, as she dropped before him; the gay smile on the lips of the Russian officer who had called her mother a shameful name; Tom Kellynch walking briskly along the lane, a sinister figure, for all his wholesome aspect of trig, outdoors simplicity, a sinister figure, to her mind. She pushed it out of sight with a shudder.

Cold, disagreeable rain met her punctually as her train reached London,—one of those May rains which seem to postpone indefinitely any hope of summer. Nicole resented it. The grey gloom of smoke over Curzon Street made her heart heavy. As she came along in the cab, she knew just how the rooms would look: clean, stiff, bleak, naught of herself in them but a book or two. Of course, she might have done more to them, had her own belongings, made more effort to create a personal atmosphere. Why had she not? Because, she told herself fiercely, she was too proud; she did not belong there; she belonged elsewhere and she would show it by not taking root. Her grievance was the only home she made for herself. So that with all her love for beautiful things, she had sullenly refused to touch Madden's ugly sofas and chairs, common carpets and curtains and vases—proper furnishings for the Outer Ward! This afternoon Nick dwelt more pitifully on the room's emptiness. When she put her key into the lock, bitterness sprang alight in her soul. Not a creature in the dreary place to care whether she came or not! Even Miss Wylie with the gold teeth

used to be there to cry: "Hello, Chick!" when she came in. Now, nothing

Slowly Nick climbed the stair, carrying her bag and wet umbrella. She opened her door and stood gasping.

The room was brilliant with flowers. They stood about on tables and mantleshef: groups of tall May lilies, freesias, violets in low bowls, daffodils like bursts of sunshine. The fire had been lit, so the air was warm and perfumed; drawn near to it was the tea-table set in readiness. Usually these things had to be ordered; often she went without, because it was such a bore to watch them laboriously and grudgingly produced. Now, the place glowed with welcome, warmth, care—what did it mean?

"Oh, yes, miss—the gentleman would be arranging them himself, miss," Madden explained, when summoned. "An American gentleman, he said he was, quite the stranger, if I may say so. There wasn't vases to suit him—not by no means, so 'e brought some back in a taxi. He would 'ave the fire—though 'tis a bit stuffy—and your tea all ready—the cakes 'e got 'imself, it seems. Very odd indeed he was."

"Very odd!" Miss Grannet repeated and fell into a chair.

"No, he wouldn't stay, miss, though I pressed him ever so. 'A bit more like 'ome the place looks, don't it now?' he says and laughed, like I laughed myself, miss," Madden continued, unmistakeably twinkling still, "when 'e asked me where your slippers was! 'Er boots'll be wet' he says, 'and she'll be wanting to change;—she'll be wanting her tea, too,' says he, 'they always do,' he says, and he went away laughing. I've a fowl for your dinner miss—beautiful!" And Mrs. Madden hospitably bustled away.

Her departure left Nicole in a state of utter bewilderment, not so much at the events themselves, which were remarkable enough, but at the even more remarkable circumstance of the landlady's good humor. It must have cost a fortune, Nicole reflected, to transform Madden like that! However, she sank back in her chair, sniffed the violets lying at hand, slipped off her wet shoes, drew on her warm slippers and sat down to tea.

This was the beginning of a curious experience. Without a word being spoken, without any change in her life, she found herself suddenly the object of a vigilant, sensitive, protecting care. The source of this care, while never, of course, in doubt, was never acknowledged; her thanks were skillfully evaded, so that she found it impossible to open the subject. She saw no more than before of Mr. Denis Traquair and she had never seen very much. He spent many hours with Lord Heriot, but, on his entrance and departure, he did not turn in the direction of the little office. He never seemed to notice that sudden, significant silence of the typewriter; his quick, light step never lingered at the door. If he did enter her room with Lord Heriot, his manner would be courteously preoccupied; it raised a barrier against which she could not protest and he continued careful not to see her alone. All this made Nick unwontedly hesitant and shy; she was carried helplessly along on this enveloping current of kindness, and even her pride could not struggle against its fullness and impetus. By the manifestations of this watchful care, her whole existence became transformed. She might have had a group of guardian angels, with no thought but to study her likes and dislikes, her goings and comings, to satisfy her mood of the moment or to accord

her an open protection. Incessant small acts all tending to give her the illusion of being important, surrounding her with the flattery of being a constant centre of thought. Fresh flowers appeared every few days in her sitting-room, arranged against her return. Almost daily she found that someone had been there before her. The latest book of which the world talked lay at her elbow; some delicate dish was served at her stodgy dinner, concerning which she dared not ask. A framed supplement to Pear's Annual disappeared from her wall to be replaced by two subtle etchings; overnight, her window shades were changed from crimson to cream. One afternoon, all her furniture had put on a new dress of chintz, in happy colors of the spring; her tea-table was always ready now with its little service shining and its cloth fine and fair; when she put her hand unexpectedly to her reading-lamp, she touched, in surprise, a cold vase of grey-green Chinese porcelain. On rainy days taxis appeared out of nowhere; while, the morning she had to go to Trampen Park on estate business, she arrived to find the footman from Berkeley Square mounting guard over a carriage with magazines, a lunch basket and a leather cushion (this latter stroke of genius was due to Denis's recollecting his mother's complaint of the fatigue of an English railway carriage). It was absurd to suppose that her employer had suddenly become so thoughtful for her comfort.

All the way in the train and back, Nick's thoughts contested tumultuously with this protection; but she came to no conclusion. If, she wildly thought, the creature had paid her these attentions in the ordinary pursuit of the female; if he had called, asked her out, sought her society, demanded any earthly quid pro quo,

she might have asserted herself—but he didn't! She never saw him there; he never showed himself; he never gave her any reason to suppose it was he—only she knew who it was. Madden, when questioned, denied everything, accounted for everything; she hadn't seen Mr. Traquair; she had been intending "as ever was" to give her valued lodger new shades and covers; she thought her young lady might fancy a *paté*, early asparagus and forced fruit; surely, the etchings were pretty? and most people preferred Chateau Mouton—Rothschild, 1892, to a humble pint of *Médoc*? This last was sheer lunacy, stark, staring madness, no less and Nick knew not whether to laugh or to cry. Once and only once did she catch him at it. She came home unexpectedly, heard voices in the bedroom, and, opening the door, discovered Mr. Traquair in his shirt sleeves, assisting a local electrician to put in a switch receptacle. She stood in the doorway, trying to look severe.

"What on earth," she inquired, "are you doing here?"

Mr. Traquair looked pleasant, though slightly preoccupied. He got up from the floor and resumed his coat. His manner suggested that her arrival was an intrusion.

"We're all but finished," he remarked; "I'm going now. Mrs. Madden thought a plug would be convenient in here—you can use an electric iron or a heater when she gets one. I wanted to see if you use the same system as we do at home."

He turned to leave the room and Nick helplessly followed him. In the hall, at the head of the stairs, she spoke:

"Mr. Traquair—what am I to say—how am I to thank you? What did you do it for—this—and all the other things?"

Her uplifted eyes were wide and troubled: he was careful not to look at them. He stared hard over her head at the wall.

"Well," he answered stiffly, "it's more like home if you have what you like." And he moved away as one in a hurry to be gone.

Nick caught her breath. "Oh," she cried, "do you think that makes home?"

"Don't you?"

"A little bit—but not so much as having something to look after."

"That's easily had," said Denis and fled before she could speak. She was indignant such abrupt, gauche ways! Two or three days later she came home to find on her hearth in a basket, a white Persian kitten with a coral earring. This time she cried a little—the man was impossible!

She wept with the kitten on her lap until a drop fell on its nose, when it sneezed and jumped down. Cats disapprove of tears.

She wrote him a letter, striving incoherently to protest, thank, and threaten, all at once. He did not answer. She even went to the length of calling him on the telephone, and when she heard his voice, though half-suffocated with what she termed embarrassment, she tried to say that he must'nt; that she couldn't—that she did so appreciate—and so on. She said a great deal and was quite dignified and eloquent, but after his first tranquil, "Oh, don't worry—that's all right!" he made no rejoinder and she found herself talking only to the operator. Nick was furious; she stamped her foot with vexation, and, when she went to her box to soothe herself with a cigarette, she discovered it filled

with a fresh supply, bearing her initials. She began to laugh; she laughed hysterically.

"And the man doesn't like women to smoke!" said she, while the kitten climbed into her lap and settled down there, purring.

Before she had finished the cigarette, she was stroking the kitten softly, and smiling to herself. Well, it was stupid to be cross, when one couldn't deny that life was pleasanter, oh, a great deal pleasanter, since all this began. Sooner or later, they must come to an understanding and the whole thing must end, but not just yet. Nick looked about her transformed room and knew that she came back to it with quite a different feeling nowadays. He musn't think her an ingrate, preposterous as he was in forcing her to make the first move. To be on one's dignity was silly . . when one had so few friends. The next time she heard his steps in the room beyond her office, Nick deliberately called to him. Denis came in. He looked very nice, she thought, almost English in fact, but there was an un-English gleam in his eye.

"The kitten is such a dear," Miss Grannet began, "and she's great company——"

"Oh, have you a kitten?" he asked, carelessly.

"She makes it ever so much more like home and so do the flowers and the books, only——"

"Only what?" Denis used that crisp, resourceful manner, as one would say: "A slice of the Moon? Certainly—get a hot plate ready!"

"Sometimes, I think it would be more like home if a friend would drop in, now and then, to tea."

Their eyes met.

"Five o'clock?" the young man asked.

"I can get home today by five."

Miss Grannet returned to her work and Mr. Traquair disappeared. After a few moments, she was struck by an idea. On her desk, prominently placed yet ever neglected, lay the maps, and blue-prints of the Silver-water Valley, Pennsylvania. Smiling to herself, as if the affair had been happily terminated, she took them to a closet, put them on a back shelf and locked the door on them.

CHAPTER XVIII

"So you see, I shall have to keep my nose to the office grindstone for a great many years. Not that I mind, for the law's tremendously interesting work, bringing one into contact with all sorts of people—and I like people—and yet all the while satisfactorily founded on real principles. I like that too—in one's work, don't you? It's so very steadying to the mind. I'd hate a job where there were no traditions and no principles. Then, international law too is in the re-making: one might have a chance to do some awfully important things in the future and one's success would be real. For recreation I shall have the Silverwater Valley, which father will always let me attend to and which I love, though I know you don't. It will be splendid; you'll see"

"I see that you have it all planned."

Mr. Traquair was quite at home. He was talking on the absorbing and stimulating subject of himself, his ideas, his work, his future. It was now after half-past six and he had arrived promptly at five. He had not been talking about himself all that hour and a half, be it understood, but only when a pair of kind eyes had urged him to do so. Everything in his reception, in the atmosphere, had been so sympathetic—unexpected. His flowers surrounded them nodding encouragement. The kitten sharpened her claws on his trousers, then jumped to his knee where she sat with

the quaintest air of proprietorship. His hostess, the kitten's mistress, had met him with a warm touch, electrical and smooth, with a smile, responsive and fresh, with no cloud over the luminous gaze she turned on him. She had put him at ease and not once had they touched even the fringes of past bitterness. In the thought that he was really seated with her, talking as he had so often longed to talk, Denis sank into an absolute bewilderment of pleasure. Were they really going at last to be the friends he had always felt they were meant to be by character? Did she too enjoy their talk as he was enjoying it? Denis couldn't believe it—doubt and happiness overflowed him in alternate waves and threw him into sudden pauses.

In reality Nick was probably enjoying the visit rather more, being less self-conscious. She had no friends in London. Wholly dominated in this, as in all else, by her grievance, she had early determined that she would make no acquaintances as Miss Grannet which she would not have made as Miss Kellynch of Berkeley Square. The result was an unwholesome isolation, which an occasional dinner or theatre engagement with Major Kellynch was not sufficient to break. Nicole had accepted these invitations from preconceived plan, but one could hardly be flattered by them, when one reflected on the kind of women who usually shared Major Kellynch's leisure hours and when one knew very well that it was not as his first cousin Miss Grannet had been invited!

So this friendly chat, so unforced, so flattering in tone, about books and countries, about people and ideas and young ambitions—this was delightful and took her wholly away from herself. She had intended, of course, after subduing it to just the right comradely note,—

when all was going well and he was off his guard—to assume an air of kindly dignity. Then, in a maternal and superior manner, she would let him know her wish that what she termed “his ridiculous behavior” should at once cease and determine. An admirable scheme indeed, if one could get a start at it the trouble was one couldn’t. Mr. Traquair had so much to talk of that, when he rose to depart, his choice of subjects still dominated the conversation. Moreover, he had been apparently so glad to turn away from their miserable past misunderstandings, that Nick hated to be the one to recall them. To introduce the personal element seemed disconcertingly female. The visit had passed in a flash; her eyes were shining with the stimulus, the interest of a new friendship; her morbid self was all forgotten, and Denis had not been gone half-an-hour when she found she must go to the telephone to tell him something she had overlooked. The odd thing was that he was just about to do the same thing himself, with some idea of equal importance! What an amusing coincidence! They laughed at it together.

Thereafter, they met almost daily yet she never did find the moment; in fact, the whole matter became supremely unimportant in contrast with what they had to say. This was a great deal; this was in fact everything in “that broad, bright, breezy common of the universe” on which Denis invited her to ramble. He seemed to expect much of her, and, when she came to know him better, she saw that this expectation involved a high standard, as well as a flattering belief in one’s powers as a person which was part of Denis’s own nature. She told herself that this nature was likeable. He was, of course, cocksure, irreverent of things as they are, and deadly obstinate; but he was picturesque. He

made the things he liked picturesque, even the Silver-water, even the States. He lived in a sunshine which gilded the Outer Ward, making life an adventure. One had impulses one was ashamed to show him, and others that one couldn't wait to show him. Sometimes, when they met, her thoughts would run out toward him breathlessly, so eager were they to join hands with his.

Never once during those weeks when Denis was spending his money, forgetting his family and neglecting his work, never once by tone or eye or gesture, did he reveal his emotional side. He had himself well in hand; his voice was cool and level, his gaze steady. The care with which he enveloped her in such cunning art she came to accept as a background to life and he saw it with exultation. She began to talk as though there was something in life besides being the Honorable Miss Kellynch, to remember that there were books, ideas and art, that there were Alps and rivers.

Such deliberate efforts with which he had produced her reactions to life, he now began to heighten. He asked services of her, making especial demand on her time; because he realized the lack of her existence was that she had nobody to make such demands. Those hawsers at which human nature tugs so blindly, so restlessly, against the tide, she had none of them; she drifted, drifted on the black flood of loneliness. Denis's perception of this state caused him to make more than one fantastic attempt to create the illusion of ties, which in most lives are a reality.

"Could it have been you who upset my work basket yesterday and let all my spools lie on the rug?" Nick asked indignantly, when on coming home she found him there awaiting her. Denis quietly nodded.

"It was an accident, in the beginning," he explained;

"then I just didn't pick them up. I thought it was more like home, as if you had someone belonging to you, if you found things that way."

"Oh! So you left everything in a mess in order that I might have the novelty of scolding you for it?"

"If you like to put it that way, yes. But we were saying——"

This time she would not let him slip aside.

"You have taken upon yourself then, have you, to give me a course in family life, as it were?"

"A very elementary one."

"But suppose I don't like it; suppose I don't choose to go on?" she spoke gravely.

"Oh, well, such a course isn't elective, you know, it's required."

"Mr. Traquair, you waste your time."

"I don't agree, Miss Grannet. The course is brief, since, as you told me at our first meeting, I shall remain over here only such a little while."

He spoke idly, indifferently, but Nicole had no answer. Nothing altered that cool, friendly air, that way he had of fixing his concentrated gaze upon her, until his light eyes were like two steel points. Now he was going on to read aloud the article he had begun, in a manner especially annoying because it was so matter-of-fact. She couldn't keep her mind on the article and was just going to say so, when Madden came upstairs, announcing Major Kellynch.

A hard quarter of an hour followed. The Englishman behaved the best. Nick was artificial and Denis remained decidedly glum until he withdrew as quickly as was decent. Never could he emulate the other's bluff frankness. Major Kellynch had been so very open, so hearty, so sportsmanlike, so full of chat about

Ascot, the Derby, the American's Cup, and big game shooting, so quick with his "I say" and "Quite" and "Rather," Denis simply hated him more than ever. That subterranean current of understanding which he plainly felt to flow between the two chilled him to the bone. He departed, leaving Major Kellynch playing with the kitten in happiest mood of simplicity and kindness. Nick's little laugh followed Denis down the stair.

He tramped all over Kensington Gardens trying to work off his feelings and wondering if the endless twilight would ever close. The long, silvery withdrawal of the summer day got on his nerves. Yes: she was right, he was wasting his time. One couldn't set the crooked straight, not in the Old World anyway, he had better go home. He got back to his hotel late and tired; ate a solitary dinner and went to bed, although there was more than one card on his dressing table. In his dreams he heard the splashing of the Silverwater, hurrying through the rhododendron roots, while he stood on the hill-side to see the western shaft of gold slide down until it touched the pools and set them aflame. Again, as so often in his boyhood, the sunset breeze ruffled his hair and felt cool against his forehead and his eyes rested with longing upon the arch of hills, whence night was about to walk forth upon a purple sky. As he stood there, it seemed to him he held another by the hand, the handclasp was warm and eager and deliciously intimate and trustful. But when he turned with joy and hope to see who it was, behold the fingers slipped out of his palm and there was no one there! He stood, as before, quite alone above the Silverwater, gazing at the sunset, and in the pang of

that solitude awoke to look forth upon an ugly London dawn.

The next day was the first for many weeks that he made no sign whatever, whether direct or indirect, and when Nick returned to her rooms that afternoon, she found neither book nor flower nor cigar-ash scattered on the floor. Very chill and empty it looked; she wondered if anything had gone wrong. He hadn't stopped in at Berkeley Square and Lord Heriot had asked for him impatiently more than once. Yet it didn't do to telephone—oh, she hoped indeed that nothing had gone wrong! She was anxious; she hesitated; she fluttered to and fro irresolutely; she was still protesting to herself against her telephoning—when the instrument was already in her hand. Denis's voice, low and gratified, rewarded her in a moment with the relief of hearing he was quite all right and she was to see him tomorrow. Nick turned away with a song on her lips and a smile in her eyes and she gave no thought at all to yesterday's talk with Major Kellynch which had followed her friend's withdrawal. She never gave it a thought, and yet it had been an extremely important interview, which she could not afford to neglect. If human nature were not subject to such lapses, our schemes would succeed oftener than they do.

Tom Kellynch had come on a definite errand and had been discomposed to find the American present on terms of intimacy. Not only had he an innate suspicion of the race and of the legal profession, which arose out of experience with both, but also he had counted on the "offensive and defensive alliance" proposed to him to exclude all other influences over Heriot. There were points about the estate management in which he meant to have his say in future. Some of the land was un-

productive and it should be so no longer. There were other possibilities; there was timber; there was coal; there was a zinc mine in Australia; and Tom Kellynch licked his lips at the thought of them. He had no opinion of Marrindon and he intended that Marrindon should go. If he and Nick kept Heriot to themselves, the income from all these holdings might be greatly increased. He had no doubts about their managing. Not unnaturally, he looked upon his uncle as already somewhat soft in the head a literary temperament is apt to be so regarded by persons of Major Kellynch's kidney. Everything about Heriot's dress and tastes and talk indicated to his thoughtful nephew that he might be managed by the right person. Nicole was evidently that person; but there was no room in Major Tom's plan for intimate and protective American friends. If Nicole had only turned her mind to consider Major Kellynch's voice, and words and manner, she would have found much to think of. His attack was direct.

"Don't think much of that fella," he remarked, after Denis's departure, "smooth-talking chap like all of 'em. Can't see what Uncle Ian finds in him—'spose he wants money to put in some wild-cat Yankee scheme?"

"Oh, I don't know; if he has, he's not told me of it," Miss Grannet carelessly answered. A pause fell; Major Tom put down the kitten and leaned back comfortably in his chair.

"Been thinking about what you said," he began. "Serious business, what? Never was a marryin' man, and the question is—are you right about it after all? Is he goin' to do me out of my rights—really? 'Cause I can't well believe it."

"Oh, I'm right about it," replied Miss Grannet, and

he came near hating her for the cool assurance of her voice. "He doesn't look on it as your right, y' know. All that money came from quite outside the Kellynches, remember."

"I know—but one can't keep up the estate without it!"

"Perhaps; but your uncle isn't worrying about that."

"And you mean to tell me he's going to leave you half a million pounds?" he queried incredulously.

"I've never said so," Nick rejoined. "I only said he was not going to leave them to you."

"It's a damned outrage," he muttered. "Somebody ought to talk to him. Now, look here!" In his concentration he dropped any semblance of deference and his sheer literalness of manner caused her to eye him with dislike. "Suppose I agree to this—it lets me in for a lot. Marriage is marriage, however accommodating the lady may be, or may have to be—Uncle Ian may be good for twenty years. If I consent, it's to be understood that I get something out of it at once—something handsome, eh?"

She set down her cup and put the bowl of violets to her nostrils; she needed something sweet. Her action was deliberate; it showed a subtle indifference which he attributed to her certainty. "She knows she's going to get the money—she's not in such a hurry," he thought and anger rose in him.

"Oh—have we got as far as that?" she murmured and looked at the violets.

Major Tom controlled himself and fell back on a note of apology. "Well, you know," he said, and his tone was manly enough, "a poor devil does get hot under the collar now when he thinks of it. Whatever you say, money and land ought to go together and I'd say

the same if you were the heir. What would become of England else?"

She was still smiling her little smile, secure and amused, at these sentiments. He turned irritably.

"Seems to me it's an infamous outrage," he reiterated.

Delicately, Nicole removed the fresh fragrance of the violets and turned herself toward her guest with more gravity:

"Oh, of course, Major Tom, if you prefer to be Lord Nothing." . . ?

"I don't—you know I don't,—I'm not denyin' it. Only—a fella wants to know what he's to let himself in for and what he's to get for his name."

"Naturally. It simply seems to me that we—you and I—might be stronger together than apart, that's all." Her voice, too, was matter of fact, although there was another part of her that seemed to protest while she talked. She had rehearsed this scene too often in the past not to know her part perfectly, and she was not going to listen to any inner protest now. "I've positive knowledge your uncle is going to leave everything away from the estate. Events may alter his plans; lately, I see indications that he's going to consider my future more than he thought at first. I've great influence over him. I might make him change his mind about you, or, if I can't do that, I may make it unnecessary. He's not awfully strong as a matter-of-fact and he is beginning to realize his own loneliness. In time, I expect my own position with him to be stronger than it is now. Things are tending that way. But you will remember what I told you at Tram-pen Park, that matters cannot be hurried. You can see for yourself that, if he suspected any arrangement be-

tween us now, he might do anything. And whatever he'd decide to do, at least he'd see to it you were not the gainer. Therefore, we must wait until a definite moment is reached."

"And that is——?"

"When I am taken into his house, when I become Miss Kellynch."

Again he was conscious of hating her: the brilliant eyes, slim body, firm red mouth and all; for the certitude she expressed and for the success he foresaw. Some of this feeling escaped as he stood up.

"Well, anyway," he said more vehemently, "you'll have to get rid of this Yankee. I won't have him livin' in Heriot's pocket. None of my money goes to the States. If you're playing straight by me, you'll send him packin', d' you hear?"

"Tis early days to dictate," said she softly, and then, anxious to propitiate, she added, "I wouldn't worry about Mr. Traquair, Major Tom. He'll go soon: they all do. Won't you light another cigarette?"

CHAPTER XIX

IN ANY scheme, the danger point occurs immediately after the first success. Up to this moment Nick had cleverly played her game so as to appear to Major Kellynch an ally worth having. He owed her definite obligations and he knew it; she had bestirred herself in his interests to the tune of some thousands of pounds and she had never ceased to suggest an attitude of sympathy and flattering deference.

During their meeting at Trampen Park, Major Tom had for the first time been aware of a certain assurance in her manner which he decidedly resented. Not that he minded her suggestion, for its bold ingenuity won his admiration and he was willing to consider it seriously so long as she appreciated the great, great concession it involved on his part. But the instant Nick acted as though she was conferring an obligation rather than accepting one, then her proposition assumed the aspect of supreme impertinence. In regard to marriage itself he was much of the opinion of Sir Anthony Absolute that "when you take the estate you may as well take it with the livestock on it as it stands." Moreover half a million pounds gilded the origin of my wife. Yet it was one thing to have her come humbly, money in hand, to bid for what he had and what she acknowledge to be priceless, it was very much another when she asked him to lay his name at the feet of her indispensable fortune! Major Tom, too, like any man

of spirit, hated being forced; he was spontaneously antagonistic toward any plan not his own. And, hang it all! She had cracked the whip too soon, with her slight, assured smile, her upraised brows, her smooth "If you prefer to be Lord Nothing?" As if what he was to be depended upon her!

Too soon had Nick relaxed her vigilant watchfulness; or was it that her head was full of other things? She ought to have noted his curt good-bye and the curious look in his dull eyes, instead of lightly pushing him and his affairs into the dusty recesses of her mind, that she might turn to pleasanter thoughts. Over-confidence is a gambler's weakness, and so also is to underestimate one's antagonist. Miss Grannet had yielded to both.

Major Tom, striding rapidly in the direction of his Club, was in a frame of mind unfavorable to his hostess, and the thoughts beginning to revolve in his head showed a keen and dangerous edge. Suppose it were a plant? Until the girl appeared, there had never been a whisper that the money would not go with the estate. Such a catastrophe had never been hinted. Suppose it were a plot arranged between father and daughter? Very well but, if Heriot wanted him to marry his bastard, Heriot should pay for it! Ten thousand pounds was not too much. He would stick out for ten thousand. Then this hope evaporated under the harsh breath of facts. He had nothing to bargain with; she was there. She was in the saddle and he must sweat for it.

But was there no other way? Was he sure he could not oust her? Daughter or no, she'd been there less than three years. He cursed his own laziness which had made no effort to undermine her influence, but

then, who would have believed in Uncle Ian's treachery? Even now, he tried to assure himself she was lying; but in his heart he knew the peril to be very real. It would be like Uncle Ian, to be melodramatic to the end.

Was she so secure? Could he find out nothing to play against her? Where had she come from, anyway? France, they said, and before that, America. Well, he knew something himself about the States; he recalled his experiences, and his lips drew away from his teeth in a grin. Her mother, the dancer, had died in Argentina, but the girl had been left behind in New York. She told him that herself. She had not, however, told him with whom; it was worth finding out, and as the first step in this line of enquiry, Major Kellynch determined to seek expert advice.

London is a city of experts; they live in single eccentricity or banded together in Clubs; they know everything from articles of *virtu* to articles of vice. Major Tom had a female friend of authority and experience, who lived in the neighborhood of the Burlington Arcade. Her name was (probably) Teresa Georgiana Keenan, but she was known to a large circle of friends as Birdie. Although she originated in the Bible, (Proverbs; Chapters 5 and 7), she was born in the State of New Jersey and had come to England in the practice of her profession. She was a tall woman, weighing nearly one hundred and seventy pounds, of the type that is known as "a striking blonde," and she could no more be overlooked in the landscape than could a particularly gorgeous sunset. This high visibility had caused Major Tom to be a little chary of her society of late, since on their last walk together they had been observed by Lord Wroxeter, whose disapproval could not be set down to inexperience.

On her side there were days when Miss Birdie Keenan was forced to realize that Major Kellynch must be regarded in the light of a liability, rather than that of an asset. Possibly from this cause, her professional trip had so far been depressingly unsuccessful. Music-halls and musical comedies were not what they had been before the War. Miss Keenan felt the pressure of hard times; and if the one hundred and seventy pounds had anything to do with it, they were likely, so she gloomily assured herself, to vanish ere long by purely natural means.

Such was the lady's mood on the occasion of the Major's visit. Being an old friend, he was immediately admitted, to find her absorbed in such details of the toilette as the prejudiced perform in private. Privacy being an expensive habit, Miss Keenan had never acquired it, and she continued to rub her face with strange unguents and buffer her nails to a degree of polish which was intended to convey to the onlooker an impression of leisure. She was, she declared, sick of London and would go back to New York for two cents, if anyone would pay her passage.

The duet which followed was an air and variations on the theme of being hard up, with which the pair were perfectly familiar, so that their performance of it was perfunctory, and bored even themselves. Major Kellynch soon showed that he had some ideas in his head, if the lady would stop slapping her chin long enough to listen to them; and he proceeded to turn her thoughts back upon the past in a manner which aroused her curiosity. She turned on him with a touch of asperity to ask "why the third degree?" and "Did he think she was going to listen to that stuff before she had had her lunch?"

Major Tom had too much respect for his old friend's astute resourcefulness to tell her all his reasons for the questions he put to her. He asked her to lunch immediately, remarking that it might be a big thing for both of them if she could turn back her memory ten or eleven years, to the summer when she was filling a musical comedy engagement on Broadway. During that time she must have heard of the death of the famous dancer, Madame Nicoletta. Had she left a daughter behind her in New York as had been reported, and could Birdie give him any information or repeat any gossip regarding the dancer's affairs or acquaintances?

Somewhat mollified by the invitation to luncheon, the lady gave him an informed nod. She did not omit, however, an ironical repetition of his question. "Did I ever hear of the Nicoletta?, Well! D'you ever hear of Woodrow Wilson? I guess! But y'haven't told me what y'want to know for? I can't dope out all I use to hear on Broadway and besides, what do I get for it?" ..

Put to him thus, Major Kellynch was obliged to be frank.

"What I want to know," he told her in that open and honest way he had, "is just what became of the Nicoletta's girl after the mother died. And of course I'll tell you why. She's here in London, putting on airs and I hear she's going to pull off something big."

"A title?" she asked eagerly.

"It will be someday," Major Tom rejoined; "but there's a lot of money too. And I don't see why some of it shouldn't go where it's needed."

"Oh, you're kiddin', Tom. America ain't so far off

these days. I guess everything that's to be known there is known already."

"You're wrong, Birdie, my dear. The States are further than China and most of us don't know Hoboken from Palm Beach. Why shouldn't I take advantage of the fact?"

"You was in the States y'rself, 'bout ten years ago?" she asked him.

"I was, though that's neither here nor there. I heard of the dancer's death like everybody else, but that's all. The question is, what d'you know?"

She studied her glittering claws attentively as she replied: "Not a great deal. But I did hear about a child—girl around sixteen or so, wasn't she? You remember my telling you 'bout my boarding-house—the one where I stayed while the show was on? The lady what kep' it—we quarrelled afterwards something fierce—but she was perfec' to me for awhile there. Well, she had a friend who was a friend of Nicoletta's and she—the friend—got the girl boarded out for that summer. The family that took her had a bungalow on the Maine coast."

"The Maine coast," repeated Kellynch abruptly—"whereabouts on the Maine coast?"

"How'n earth should I know?"

Her friend looked thoughtful for a moment. "There'd be ways of finding out, wouldn't there, now? I'd like to hear what influences surrounded the early youth of this future Peeress," said he, and gave a cackle.

She looked at him attentively. "You're a charitable soul, ain't you? I dunno' that I can help you any. They was the kind to look down on us, y'know."

He restrained a movement of impatience. "But you met this woman who kept the girl with her, didn't you?"

Birdie shook her head. "I seen her," she admitted, "but we wasn't introduced. I wasn't moving in society then like I am now and they worked us girls awful hard anyway."

"Quite so. If you saw and heard about her, you must have known that her house wasn't the sort for a Viscountess to be brought up in; was it?"

Somehow, Birdie resented his tone and showed him that she did. "Lot's of 'em have been brought up no better," she remarked with spirit. "'Course there's always something you can find out if you set about it. They wasn't Madison Avenue and Saint Bartholomew's, exactly. I always say and maintain that there's the same corruption in the East 80's 's there is on Broadway, only they pay to keep it quiet. If I had any money—"

"Oh, I know—I know. About these people?"

"They wasn't perfess'nals; they wasn't in the show business. They took the kid to please their friend, I guess. When the Nicoletta died, they found there wasn't a cent and they was going to put the kid to work, but she ran away."

A gleam shone in Tom Kellynch's eye, and he rose from the chair in which he had been lolling.

"That's it—that's what we want. D'you know who the man was?"

In all Miss Keenan's career a certain goodness of heart, placed there by some caprice of nature who delights in these irrelevancies, had ever been present to interfere with her best interests. She had lamented it as incurable more than once and it now caused her to answer sorrowfully, as though the Nicoletta's daughter

had been a friend of her own: "Not on y'r life,—she was a straight kid, they all said; never heard a word about a man."

Major Kellynch yawned and sat down again. "Well, there'd have been money in y'r pocket if you had," he pointed out, and, under the influence of that magic hope, Birdie's impulse toward the truth became a little less dominant.

"'Twas a long time ago, Tom, and perhaps—"

"Do you know the name and address of those people in case we cable?"

"Sure, I can get it all right. But if there's any cables, you pay for 'em," she pointedly informed him; "because, like I told you, I haven't a ——"

"I understand," he interrupted. "Now listen to me," and Major Kellynch proceeded to give his old friend an outline of the possibilities which might follow a certain line of enquiry. A conference between them on practical lines resulted in Miss Keenan's agreeing to assist him, for a handsome consideration, providing that her passage to New York on a ship she selected would be paid in advance. Major Kellynch was then reminded of the promised luncheon. Birdie added a few dazzling adjuncts to her already resplendent costume and the pair descended to the street which led into Piccadilly. Along that thoroughfare she moved with stately step, to pass blazing—more like a sunset than ever—between the swing-doors of a large restaurant and out of this history.

Fate is the most ironical of dramatists, though with effects not always appreciated and sometimes played to empty houses. While waiting to cross Piccadilly, Major Kellynch and his companion chanced to be held up on an island by a heavy stream of traffic. Near

them also waited a taxi, piled high with convenient trunks, bags, cases, and hatboxes, all distinguished by the initial "T" and by the label "Mauretania." Within the cab, sat two women; one an elderly maid with a responsible look, carrying on her lap one of those subdued little dressing-cases which wear a black cover; the other a lady, slight and delicately fair, dressed with a finished simplicity which denotes the experienced taste. The eyes of the latter rested idly during this enforced pause on the man and woman standing on the island—rested, and then turned away, with the passing mental comment that this was indeed Piccadilly, for here were typical Piccadillians. Then the bobby gave the signal, the cab moved with the current, whisked into Arlington Street, and at once discharged luggage, maid, and fair protagonist at the entrance to the Ritz. Very swiftly they all disappeared within and in a moment there was no token left to the outside world of the important fact that Mrs. John Traquair had arrived in London.

CHAPTER XX

EVERYBODY who is anybody in Pennsylvania knows that there are the rich Traquairs and the clever Traquairs, and some people suspect the clever Traquairs to be richer and the rich Traquairs to be cleverer than is generally supposed. The truth is both brothers were able. James, the lawyer, married early, worked hard for, and was proud of, a family of handsome children with vigorous bodies and alert brains. Andrew made his home in the western part of the State, was interested first in oil and then in coal, and amassed in time an important fortune. If he benefited by the legal knowledge and natural astuteness of his younger brother and counsel, he gave that brother a valuable client. He had married late, a delicate wife, and she brought him a delicate son. That son's wedding to the charming Miss Edith Whittingham of Boston took place before a large body of mutual friends from two congenial cities; but there were those among the congregation to pity the radiant young creatures, marked, by the bridegroom's look, for an early parting.

By dint of spending his summers in complete rest on a Maine island, John Traquair managed to keep his health until the beginning of 1915. The Great War, with its piteous excitements, and his own passionate rebellion that he could take no part in it, were more than a spirit so high-tuned in a body so frail could endure. Edith, therefore, had been for five years a

widow, and, despite her large means and her great personal attractions, there were no indications as yet that she intended to re-marry. Intimacy between the cousins had always been close, as close as intimacy can be between the vigorous and the fragile, and, when left a childless widow, Edith spent a great deal of time with the James Traquairs. She loved them all and she liked most of them; while lately it had been evident, at least to the elders of the family, that she liked Denis much the best. She was, of course, three or four years his senior, but she was young enough to be his contemporary in anybody's opinion, moreover it was natural to like Denis, who, being intelligent, sensitive and energetic, suggested in more than one direction what John might well have been.

Edith Traquair was blonde and smiling, with hair which swept back in sunshiny ripples from her pointed face. Although she gave the impression of a high degree of finish, there was nothing about her to suggest the beauty-parlor; her Maker was still apparently responsible. She had ceased to wear mourning, but she was very apt to wear black. She had an innate gift for choosing hats. Her jewels were few and superlatively good, and, alone among her country-women that summer, she did not wear a little brown fur around her neck.

Edith had acquired the cultivation which is sought by one conscious of importance, one who feels the responsibility of being herself. She had a graceful decision which was pleasant to be with. She detested being discomposed and instinctively disliked anything she could not immediately understand. If you did what she wanted, she was extremely kind. She was so very quick and firm, she knew so exactly what she wanted

and always got it, that some people thought her heartless. This was not true; yet it is undeniable she was a little spoiled.

Such a young lady was bound to have many friends in England and Edith was gratified, though not surprised, to find cards, notes and flowers awaiting her arrival. Standing by the table in her sitting-room, she went over these in a perfect concentration, undisturbed by the bustle of maids and porters all around her. When she had replaced the last note in its envelope, she turned her directing gaze on these supernumeraries, expressed her wishes in a command or two which included a shift in the furniture, the dismissal of a screen, and the adroit re-arrangement of things for her comfort, all of which she had apparently seen out of the back of her head. In a very few minutes Edith had the room to herself; and then, with a faint frown between her brows, she went to the telephone and rang up Brown's Hotel. Edith was familiar with English telephones and quite patient, but when she hung up again, the frown had deepened. What was Denis about? These beautiful roses which she found here with his card, were no substitute for his failure to appear at Liverpool, (which she had rather looked for,) or at Paddington (which she had confidently expected,) on the arrival of the boat-train. His card, too, contained no anticipation of a future meeting. She remembered what Uncle James had told her and she wondered if he meant anything by his message, that he "hadn't intended Denis to take all summer over one matter and she had better say so, with his love."

From the window of Edith's sitting-room she could see the sweep of the Green Park and people passing to and fro in a slant of late sun. How eternal, how satis-

factorily unchangeable was London! Whereabouts could Denis be? Fine weather on a landing-day was always helpful. The voyage had been unusually agreeable—but why no Denis? She must rest and change. The dress she needed was right on top of the smaller trunk; tea was coming in now. She had ordered for two, of course. What on earth could Denis be about?

Edith had a poor opinion of independence on the part of anybody but herself. Also she possessed the conviction of a certain type of woman that if a man is not where you expect him to be, he must be doing something wrong. She left a peremptory message for her cousin at his hotel and turned her thoughts to other things and other friends; but there is no doubt that she was by no means pleased.

At the moment when Mrs. Traquair was ringing Brown's Hotel on the telephone, her recalcitrant relative was as far from her in his thoughts as ever he had been in his life. Having chosen this afternoon of all others to make an expedition to Kew in company with Miss Nicole Grannet, he had comfortably ensconced himself on an emerald turf, not far from the Chinese pagoda. Since the inopportune call made by Major Kellynch, Denis had suggested walks abroad to avoid the unthinkable misfortune of being again interrupted in conversation at home. His naïf concentration made such a plan inevitable, just as it was equally inevitable that an engagement with Miss Grannet at Kew Gardens should supercede any idea he might once have had of meeting his Cousin Edith. His universe at that moment consisted of a single figure, then of the figure's father, and, a long way below both, a large, vague crowd of other interfering people—among whom was, probably, his cousin Edith. That he should have found an instant,

among these vital preoccupations, to send her some roses, he felt was due only to his superior management. Undoubtedly Denis was mentally unbalanced at this time.

As the afternoon flew on, bearing him on its golden wings, Denis did, however, recall the arrival of the "Mauretania."

"My cousin Edith lands on this side today," he told Nicole, his eyes resting in quiet happiness on her's.

"Is that the one who rubbed me alive, the night you pulled me out of the sea?"

"Yes indeed, the same one."

"I remember she had the loveliest golden hair and was so kindly interested—only a little frightening—"

"I want you to meet; you'll be so congenial. She'll love to know you."

"Will she?" Nick asked, a thought doubtfully, but Denis answered with conviction,

"Why, of course, she will. Isn't she one of my oldest friends?"

"Then—oughtn't you have gone to meet her this afternoon?"

"Oh, I was too busy. I'll run in later on."

His tone bespoke the utmost indifference and he stretched his hand once more for the book he had just laid down. Shifting his position so that the sun should be kept from his companion's eyes, he began again to read aloud. The volume had to do with France and the French; a country and people in which he professed himself interested, desiring to inform his ignorance from its contents and from the knowledge of his companion. Nicole found her memory and reading put to a real test by this active-minded young man, whose wish for information on any subject was not to be satisfied

with a few catchwords. She became soon engaged in the healthy mental exercise of classifying and defining what she did know; new paths to life opened, new questions arose to discuss, new authors must be read.

"You expect a great deal of me, don't you?" she asked, half-jealously, and Denis answered: "Of you? Yes, a great deal!" with a strange serenity of confidence.

On their walk across the lawns to the entrance, Nicole slipped and sprained her ankle badly. The pain was sharp and for the moment made her giddy, but her companion's arm upheld her and while she set her teeth, she heard his voice, concerned and quiet: "Is the pain too severe? Shall I get help or can you manage to hobble to the gate on my arm?"

"I'll try," she said and managed it somehow, very slowly and feeling almost faint. Once in a taxi, she sank into a corner and could vouchsafe nothing but a pale look of endurance.

The long drive homeward in the setting sun took place in silence. Now and again she opened her eyes; she saw the quiet Thames when they crossed it on Kew Bridge; she saw Traquair's face, just a little set with anxiety on her account. He managed to steady the sprained foot so as to minimize the jolting; he asked no questions, yet she had a full assurance that he knew just how much it hurt. Vexation at the mischance came to heighten her discomfort. This was not the first time, she told him, it had occurred; and Nick hadn't forgotten the previous experience; how she had to get home alone, stand up while she made her excuses to Berkeley Square and summoned a doctor, and bear the black looks of Mrs. Madden, who did not hide her opinion that sprains had not been contracted for by

Mr. Marrindon. So disagreeable and lonely and miserable it had all been, that Nick had gone back to work far sooner than was prudent, and the second sprain had doubtless resulted from weakness left by the first.

This afternoon's events bore witness to a new order. Mrs. Madden displayed the utmost solicitude and ran up and down stairs till she was out of breath and the doctor had arrived. The patient, meanwhile, had been carried to her room between Denis and the cab-driver. An hour later, the foot had been treated, bandaged and relieved; the doctor had departed, after warnings to rest; and Nicole was comfortably settled on her sofa, before a tray containing a meal, surely not the unsupported handiwork of Madden.

Mr. Traquair, who had apparently forgotten that he usually dined himself about that hour, sat in a position whence he could survey the sofa and be at hand to anticipate the slightest movement of its occupant, to shift a cushion or to set down a cup. Agnes Sorel, the kitten, who at first displayed the utmost curiosity, had retired to her cushion with an air of dignified indifference until the arrival of the tray. She knew she was invited; she took up her position on the sofa and very delicately at intervals reminded her hostess of her presence with a small touch of her paw. Nick rested. She was eased and quieted, she looked at the friend who had said so little, had made no fuss and permitted none, but who had been there, who had been swift and constant to anticipate her needs. In her great content she closed her eyes—then opened them again for fear he should be gone. Was it possible that there were women who had by right this sort of care and companionship and yet were not glad or grateful? Oh, was it possible?

A memory of old Miss Wylie's bony, kind hands

came back—Nick's lashes were wet for an instant. She lay back looking rather white and thin and young—she lay very still. She wanted to thank him but she couldn't. She heard his voice:

"Shall I read? It may change your thoughts before you rest?"

"Pray do—there's a volume of verse there."

"Let me see—what's here—"

He picked up a book at random and began to read. Agnes shook her coral earring and had to be stroked into quiet. What had Denis found—what was he reading? Oh—that—

"Upon an obscure night
Fevered with love's anxiety
(O hapless, happy plight!)
I went, none seeing me
Forth from my house, where all things quiet be.

By night, secure from sight
And by a secret stair, disguisedly,
(O hapless, happy plight!)
By night, and privily
Forth from my house, where all things quiet be.

Blest night of wandering
In secret, when by none might I be spied,
Nor see I anything,
Without a light to guide
Save that which in my heart burnt in my side.

That light did lead me on
More surely than the shining of noontide
Where well I knew that One
Did for my coming bide;
Where he abode might none but he abide".

All at once Denis found himself out of breath. The words—the lovely words—that insisted on saying what he was trying not to say. He went on—

"O night that did'st lead thus,
O night more lovely than the dawn of light;
O night that broughtest us,
Lover to lover's sight,
Lover to loved,——"

Useless—he had no breath—. The book slipped to the floor. Denis got to his feet. At the white figure on the sofa he would not look.

"I'm sorry,—I must go—" he said in a strange, stifled voice. "It's late—late. I really must go—"

He stumbled across the rug like a person half-blind. He moved to the door and out of the room. She heard him hurrying down the stairs—then the door slammed.

That little noise was Agnes, the kitten, who kept on shaking the coral earring; otherwise the room was very still. The book lay on the rug where it had fallen. Nick closed her eyes; her ankle was beginning to throb again.

Mrs. John Traquair received no answer to her message until the next day after dinner, when Denis made his appearance at the Ritz. She was far too astute to mention her surprise at his neglect, the more, as he did not seem to feel the temperature of her greetings. He seemed absorbed and preoccupied, and she thought him looking far from well. She repeated his father's communication—in her pretty, decisive manner—but Denis brushed it wearily aside, "just exactly—" Edith told herself indignantly—"as though he was perfectly independent of the firm of Traquair, Arnold and Finch!"

When questioned, directly and indirectly, Denis gave a confused and unsatisfactory account of himself. He sat, smiling and pleasant, looking somehow different—one couldn't say just how. His eyes rested on his

cousin in a friendly manner. How was Edith to know that to Denis's vision her hair appeared black, her face square and pale, her gaze intense and craving? When his replies came, they sprang out of him in an odd, mechanical way.

He had been very busy—oh, very busy indeed. He had seen a good deal of Lord Heriot and St. Helier's. . . .

Mr. Waghorn? Oh, yes, he supposed Mr. Waghorn was still in town—he had not seen him for a long time. (To Edith, this was exactly as though a member of the Cabinet should not know whether the President was in the White House, since it was to consult with Mr. Waghorn that Denis had been sent to England!) She suggested dinner and a play, amazed that it was she who first thought of it, but before he agreed, Denis said he really must telephone about a sick friend. No, thanks,—he wouldn't use her 'phone—he'd just run down a minute—. He did, and, when he returned, his manner was more natural. After they parted, however, Edith was confirmed in her conclusion that Denis would undoubtedly bear watching.

CHAPTER XXI

HERIOT, leaning on Denis's arm, strolled the Long Walk through Kensington Gardens, in the mild withdrawing radiance of a June afternoon. His mood was discursive, the more that, as he explained, the absence of Mr. Lewis Cust, due to an attack of gout, and of his secretary with a sprained ankle, caused the Berkeley Square house "to give only an echo to my garrulity. I wasn't meant to live alone, my dear—I've too much talk in me still. . . ."

Heady and full raced the current of that talk this afternoon. Even Denis, buffeted and tired by the storm of his emotions,—absorbed, perplexed Denis,—even he was captured, and held by it. He had but to look up at the stately head beside him, to meet the persuasive smile, the glance, piercing, yet naif, the air of being at once actor and audience and sincere in both, and it was as if he caught the flash of a bird-of-paradise through a crowd of sparrows.

Fortunately, the hour was late for perambulators, so the Long Walk was comfortably empty. As the two paced along, Heriot gave easy expression to his plans and ideas for the future, at which the other felt more and more helpless.

Traquair, the elder man insisted, must be put up at a Club—but then which Club? Brooks's might be the best, all things considered, but it took seven years to get into Brooks's. By a very special effort, something

might be effected at the Carlton in the autumn. Liberal Clubs, of course, were not to be thought of. But by October—

"But by that time, sir, I shall be gone," Denis interjected at this point, and Heriot looked coldly at his young friend, as he was apt to look whenever Denis broached the subject of his return home.

"No reason for you to be leavin', none at all. Your good Father's there, isn't he? to look after the dollars and you know my motto—*Res morari potest*—Business can always wait. Besides—haven't you and I gone all over those tiresome maps and blue prints and didn't I give you that letter, tellin' Graham to consider you my personal agent, in any matter connected with the property? What more d'ye want?"

"No one, sir, could possibly ask for more. But—"

"But me no buts, my dear; a chap's thirty but once." The gracious smile had a peremptory quality.

The day had been soft, for summer in London has a lazy charm all its own. Parks gay with people gave an effect of holiday; your Londoner rarely goes far afield for his pleasuring. In a transparent sky, a few idle clouds floated. Strains of a waltz began to reach them from the distant band in Hyde Park. Over all lingered a fine golden mist, wholly different from the turquoise and diamond sparkle which Denis remembered of home.

As they walked, Heriot hummed gently to himself a little air from "La Belle Hélène" "Je suis le roi Ménélas—le roi Ménélas, le roi Mé—né—las!" The words were gay. Somehow this led to talk about the books he read and the impressions he valued. He spoke of his likes: Horace, Homer, Lucretius, Bacon, the Elizabethans, Turgenev—of the

music and glitter of Laus Veneris—of his dislikes: Browning, Carlyle, (“dirty old man—pretendin’ to be a prophet when what he needed was a bath.”) Denis noted he didn’t connect himself with any literary group, past or present. “I lived at the end of the century—but I never was *fin de siècle*.” Nor was he. He wrote; he had always written as sparingly as beautifully, and that writing constituted for him a wholly private satisfaction. He was part of no movement, member of no school. When he had something to say, he said it, and people listened. To him the 1890’s were a self-conscious and amateurish period and he alluded to one of their few survivors as “the fella who—about 1895—became one of those darin’ pioneers who discovered the reproductive instinct!” Of another: “Such a goose, my dear, he’s well off in the Elysian Fields, which are simply quackin’ with flocks of such geese.”

Then he told Denis of the best way to learn languages, (which was at the Chancelleries of Europe) and described his own life-long practice of solacing himself at bed-time by reading a passage or two from Homer, “a habit, my dear, which a lady I remember found very inconvenient!”

“In my day, we talked about books and people. Nowadays you talk about facts, things that everybody knows and nobody believes.” He touched in passing on his friend Wroxeter. “Indiscreet, if you like, but an able fella—don’t underrate Wroxeter!”

“I don’t,” from Denis hastily: “he writes a charming letter.”

“Yes don’t overrate him!”

From books and friends it was three steps up to the thrones of the past and how Queen Victoria succeeded in making domesticity the fashion. “Such a mistake as

it turned out to be. Nothing is so dull as a court that isn't courting. King Edward knew it and he tried his best, poor dear!"

As always, when fully launched, Heriot's tongue slipped its leash; quotations, allusions, phrases, and highly-colored adjectives, galloped along with him. The fashion of indiscreetness, which he had acquired in his youth, had lasted over from William IV, and was revived as a re-action from the prim Victorian mode. Sometimes it is forgotten that the Victorian age had its origins in, as well as its recoil from, the Georgian, and his young friend could not know that Heriot's occasional lapses from taste were merely relapses into the taste of an earlier generation. This afternoon he entertained the slightly-embarrassed Denis with a description of the establishment and the impedimenta which Mme. Nicoletta insisted on carrying about with her and which numbered "a Corsican maid, (who carried a stiletto in her stocking); an Italian butler; the baby and the wet-nurse—(a magnificent creature, my dear, and a Child of Nature); a pair of green parakeets and a Maltese spaniel—with ME in the middle tryin' to keep 'em from tearing each other to shreds."

Fate spreads her pitfalls for the talkative, and doubtless had her own obscure purposes in leading on Lord Heriot into reminiscences so unwontedly intimate. Perhaps his companion's silence drew him from these accounts to a gentle enjoyment of the beauty of the day, and thence to remark as they passed a bed of velvet-black pansies:

"Do look at those—they are just like my little secretary's eyes."

Denis's patience gave out. The observation seemed to him, under the circumstances, little short of atroc-

ious. The picturesque, the byzantine, the rococo, he suddenly revolted from them all. During these occasions he was usually and joyfully the listener, but here he stumbled over something which he couldn't understand and it moved him to self-assertion.

"I saw Miss Grannet yesterday," he said abruptly. "The doctor told her she was all tired out. She's not at all strong."

"Is it so? I thought her face was privet-white," Heriot commented.

"He thinks she must rest and stay away for some time."

"Oh, you know these vets, my dear," the other said serenely. "She's much better off coming to the house every day than stayin' on in lodgings. Besides I need her. And a little sprain is nothing."

"The sprain, is slight of course, but she lives under a daily, hourly strain, you know." The speaker drew breath, but the face above him was still kindly. "Myself, I wonder how she bears it."

Lord Heriot either did not or would not read below the surface of these words. His reply was a serene: "Oh, quite! But she'd better come along to Berkeley Square. There's not much doin', just a few letters and so on. I'll get them to send a taxi for her tomorrow. She's too young to be sick. I was never sick in my life."

"My God, Sir;" Denis broke out with an altogether unexpected intensity of face and voice. "The girl is sick of her life and sick for a home!"

There fell a marked pause. The young man, afraid of his own outburst, began to hurry on some would-be diverting story, in a manner that had a touch of hysteria.

But Heriot had seen and heard; Heriot had been moved and startled. Over the handsome face reserve dropped like a curtain on a richly brilliant stage. The rest of the way home when he spoke, it was idly, of small, surface things. Denis parted with him at Berkeley Square and hurried away quickly up Hay Hill, that he might dress and take Edith to dine with Mr. Waghorn.

Lord Heriot mounted slowly the steps of his house and stood for an instant looking after the light-footed young man, as he turned the corner and disappeared. Then he entered, was relieved of his hat and stick by his waiting servant, and paused to glance at his mail, turning his head as he did so, instinctively, toward the empty morning-room. After this he went up the short flight into his library, through whose panes a few last sunbeams were pointing, and where the rich and reposeful atmosphere of books and pictures suited his mood. Here, close to the window, stood his great leather chair with the evening paper folded over the arm of it, and into this he lowered his long body and settled himself. At first he made a pretence of glancing at the news, but he soon laid the paper aside and sat with absent gaze fixed upon the sky without. He rested his head on his hand and the long fingers stirred the curls that once had been named "hyacinthine"—old and beautiful word. Ah, he who had been Apollo in his boyhood and Zeus in his maturity could he bear to look forward to slow decay and loss of that immortality of beauty? Zeus was a very lonely phase, while Olympus nowadays was very cold and empty

Could it be possible that young Traquair intended *criticism*? The full lips drew together at the suspicion. These Yankees sometimes were apt to take an ell, if

one gave 'em an inch. Had he encouraged the boy too far? Heriot might truthfully have admitted that he'd had a lot of criticism in his day and that he was tired of it; he preferred sympathy and admiration. Most of us do. There had been no doubt regarding young Traquair's admiration and probably this sudden, icy breath from him was Heriot's own fault, for too soon abandoning the grand manner. Then the recollection rose of Denis's clear, troubled eyes and his mouth relaxed. Oh, he was just a young Quixote and a good thing to be at his age. Still——

Disagreeably silent, the house. This hour just before dinner was the time usually given up to Lewis Cust. The two would sit in peace together and sometimes in a long and close discussion, having for its theme history, research, literature, or art—anything, in fact, so that they might turn from the threadbare present, to the richly-robed past. Yes, he missed his old friend, and foresaw, with a sombre foreboding, that perhaps Cust might not be able henceforward to make his home in London. Bad, bad, this growing isolation—he'd had so many friends; now most of them were sunk into lethargy, if they yet remained on the right bank of the dark river. He shook his head with a fine, melancholy smile. He was the last of that joyous cohort, he was the Winged Victorian!

Youth, youth, that was the only thing! He'd had a perfect instrument to play on in his day, and now some of the keys were dumb. True, he'd never led men—that had been his lack—he'd no mastery over men or events. Unconventional as he thought himself, yet conventions of his own forming had always been his guide. He'd never considered it before, but looking back he saw it was so. He'd been held by

conventions even when he lived with Nicoletta—the convention of his class had in a sense sanctioned that relation, just as had the convention of her's. He had followed convention also when it came to her daughter, that cautious convention which, to preserve caste, keeps the bastard as an employee, keeps the illegitimate child in the Outer Ward. The girl—was that her light step running up the stair? No. Unconsciously, he hearkened, he hoped for it.

“——The sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home, she stood in tears amid the alien corn” How intense, white-hot, those words! And how was he to change things? No fault of his; he couldn't re-make society. The child was baseborn; he couldn't help it now. Such a happy compromise had been effected, as he thought, by the present arrangement. It had been his own adroit idea, having her as his secretary. He thus preserved appearances and yet had what he wanted—for he did want it, the nearness of his child. Possibly, in having what he wanted, he had overlooked that the position had been something of a strain for her. He'd come to rely on her and people noticed it,—filthy beasts most of 'em were—quite so! He moved uncomfortably in his chair.

Fly in the face of the world, just 'cause she wanted a home? The young man was a fool. Yes, but he wanted a home too, badly. She was lonely, was she, the lassie? Well, and hadn't he envied his friends their stalwart sons and wide-eyed daughters? Because, deny it as one might, children were the only valid protest of the individualist, the only freight of the human spirit, the only witness to the soul. In the broad sense—children, spiritual, mental and physical, sons of the spirit, of the brain and of the body. There was noth-

ing else before personality dissolved as a drop into the cold, swift stream. Without them, how was the world to remember that one had ever been? One must leave something behind; it was the only immortality.

Sick for home and what was he?

Undoubtedly, under these cloudy thoughts, Lord Heriot grew very sorry for himself; nor did his dinner with Lady Champyon shake him from his mood. His old friend seemed suddenly to have become middle-aged and hectoring. He recalled the cruel edge of her tongue and how fiery Denis had been in defence of the girl.

He walked home from Queen Anne's Gate across the Parks, the same strain playing through his mind. He walked slowly and more than one passerby looked after that noticeable figure. A warm summer night—town was emptying fast—but where was he to go? Of course, he knew he was right. Compromise was the only way to satisfy the world as it stands. Life was simpler for the present generation, and Heriot's lip curled at the conclusion. They had no Gods to propitiate except the Moloch of materialism. How easy life must be when no one felt obliged to make anything of himself! Yet it was dull and isolated, this business of living in a Cabinet des Antiques. Piccadilly lay before him outlined with stars and constellations. Heriot looked upon it and quoted sadly to himself: "Oh we'll go no more a-roving——"

Byron had written the perfect lyric. Byron, if not a great poet, surely a great personality——.

The next day, Nicole, as she lay upon her sofa reading, became aware of a deferential bustle in the hall. There followed a step, weighty, portentous, which mounted the stair toward her door. No other step

was just like that. She had not time to pull herself up to her feet, before her father stood in the doorway.

"Came to see how you were gettin' on," he remarked conversationally. "Won't do, you know, this leavin' me to me own devices. I'm goin' rapidly to the bad."

Nick, troubled, hastened to assure him that she was all right—she would be there tomorrow whatever the doctor said—she would see to it that nothing was neglected. While she spoke, he noticed that her eyes had burnt holes in her thin face. He moved across to the hearth-rug and stood, hands behind his back, immense, dominant in that little room.

"Ankle very bad?" he inquired.

"Oh, no, no," she hastily explained. "It was really nothing—only, the doctor found me run-down, it seems and he thought I needed a rest. I didn't wish it, my lord, I——"

He interrupted with a wave of the hand: "Nice quarters here,—you like 'em?"

She nodded in bewilderment. He studied her with a shrewd glance, then turned to straighten a vase upon the mantelpiece.

"Not your own place, exactly, is it? Pretty lonely, eh, sometimes?"

She was weak indeed. Her cold hands caught at one another and she could not dislodge the tight swelling in her throat. She did not speak.

Heriot turned his eyes away. He put out his hand toward a group of daffodils and drew the blade-like leaves smoothly through his fingers. His voice was gentle when he spoke again.

"Tomorrow morning I'm sendin' the car," he told her; "it's to take you down to Trampen Park. They're expecting you. You're to stay there till you're quite

strong and happy again; and till I've talked to Mar-rindon about our plans. Don't mention this to anyone, please. There'll be fuss enough in time and I want you out of it. When you return, it won't be here, but to your own home in Berkeley Square."

He had spoken quietly, but his face had a strange look on it, almost as if he were shy. Nick stared. Suddenly, beyond her will, she began to sob. Who knows what bitterness escaped in those sobs? She put her hands over her face, and Heriot moved uneasily. He was soft and hated tears.

For a moment she wept on; then looked up to see him standing nearer. He bent and touched her wet cheek doubtfully with his finger, a little light touch, half-admonitory, half-caressing.

"What you crying for? It's all over and done with," he told her.

"But your work—your letters—?" was all she could falter and Heriot's great, blue eyes glowed with released humor.

"I must get me another secretary," he said quaintly. "No doubt we'll go to the dogs my dear, without the invaluable Miss Grannet. But she's gone for good—the jade—and you'll have to take charge of me. Remember, when you go to Trampen Park tomorrow, you're goin' as Miss Kellynch, child, you're goin' as Miss Kellynch."

CHAPTER XXII

News that Lord Heriot's secretary was in reality his daughter, at last openly acknowledged, taken under his roof and given his name, was soon a current topic of London gossip. By his promptness in removing her at once to the country, where she remained behind closed gates, Heriot had spared the girl much, and perhaps more than either of them realized. This had not been accomplished without a painful scene with Mr. Marrindon, who felt, and justly, that he had a right after these many years to be consulted. As the solicitor hoped and believed his noble client to have outgrown the tendency to startling acts and impetuous decisions, which in the past had given him so much trouble, it was extremely discomposing to find that this was not the case. Mr. Marrindon pointed out, in plain terms and with unwonted freedom of disapproval, that there was no sense at all in leaving one's affairs to one's solicitor, only to upset all his work by an ill-advised impulse of sentiment. Lord Heriot certainly was old enough to look before he leaped and there was no excuse at all in his answer: "My dear Marrindon, I should have done this ten years ago. But then I'd always thought of the girl as Nicoletta's child—whereas, you see, she's mine. The boy I thought of as mine, and he's gone where there are no rights nor lefts."

This was literary and sentimental and engaging but

it did not soothe Mr. Marrindon, who gave every indication of being remarkably outraged.

As for Heriot, he put his head on one side, tilted his cigar toward the ceiling, assumed his Lord-in-Waiting manner, and looked down his haughty nose at his fuming counsellor. He was still under the exhilaration of having acted first and consulted Marrindon afterwards; although he by no means undervalued that faithful friend and bore his indignation with more patience than might have been expected. He felt, indeed, exceedingly stimulated from having had his own way. Mr. Marrindon's parting reproach, "as your Lordship did not see fit to ask my advice, your Lordship can hardly be surprised if all London is talking of your private affairs," was undeniable; and the various persons mentioned in this history re-acted to the story according to their several natures.

Mr. Cheke filed away in the pigeon-holes of his desk enough editorial material to make a colorful article for the Tuesday Review, and rather regretted that Lord Heriot showed no sign of dying, so that he might make use of it. Mr. Christopher Vicary went about certain drawing-rooms with eye-brows raised, murmuring cryptically: "Augusta or Allegra?" Old Mr. Lewis Cust said nothing to anybody, but savagely complained of his gout during the whole of the week. Lord Wroxeter, too, kept silence, skillfully evading the interest of his lady friends, but at the Carlton Club, he shook his head.

Mr. Waghorn ejaculated, "God bless my soul— you don't say so?" and felt very sorry for his friend Mr. Marrindon. He knew enough of the legal profession in general to know that its influence is ever toward conserving and of Marrindon in particular to realize

the irritation he must feel to see his advice flouted and the money which should uphold the Heriot name pass into the hands of the dancer's daughter. Mr. Waghorn felt keen for his brother solicitor, and, as he walked slowly homeward through Regent's Park, he wondered in his shrewd old mind if perhaps the God from the machine had not been that winged young Hermes from overseas, Mr. Denis Traquair?

Lady Champyon was so shocked and upset that her own daughter could not mention the subject to her. She immediately found herself in need of country air and left town for Bucks without opening, much less answering, the daily little notes in Heriot's characteristic, beautiful script. It was the first time in many years that this had happened, and only once before in her life had her friends ever known her to throw up without hesitation the engagements of mid-season. She belonged to the generation that considers nothing less than a temperature of 104° as a reason for breaking one's word. Once more in her yewhedge rose-garden, apparently absorbed in planting, cutting, and transplanting, Lady Champyon made a successful effort to recover her calm of mind. Every morning found her early risen, walking over her lawns all drenched with the dew, and, as she walked, her mind returned to the long friendship, to which this act of Heriot's was, she knew, in the nature of a termination. After a certain age, a man goes to his own. Although her intimacy with Heriot had begun after his separation from the Nicoletta, yet Isabel Champyon found herself hating the dead dancer with an intensity that surprised herself. Her rival had triumphed even after death, while she herself had been robbed of an interest and a hope. She knew that it was largely through this

delicate and romantic friendship she had kept her hold on youth. Heriot had been lonely and she had lessened his loneliness; he had ever been subject to the ups and downs, the exultations and depressions of an artistic temperament, and she had been at hand to strengthen and to sympathize. The world knew her as chief feminine influence in the life of a distinguished personage. It had been something to be proud of. Now she would be supplanted by another, a younger woman, a closer tie, with its perpetual recall of that earlier fascination. She could not deceive herself with any hope that her influence could survive this powerful new interest. Her day was done.

Lady Champyon was too much of an English woman to be surprised at any egotism on the part of the ruling sex. Men did these things, it seemed, and women had to bear them. Yes, it was lucky her's was not a younger, a softer heart, that this desertion had not broken, an emotional instead of a sentimental relation. She had always been a little wistful about that before, but now she was glad. There were no passionate, no tremendous memories to add their bitterness; they two had met in middle-age, they had never forgotten it. Not always had she been glad as she was now, that "the hey-day of the blood is calm, is humble, and waits upon the judgement."

So Lady Champyon returned to Queen Anne's Gate quite herself, and was very pleased to see her daughter's boys, just up from Eton. There Heriot found her as usual behind her tea-table. He was rather more glorious, touched more with the Olympian than he had lately seen fit to bestow on her. He was in high spirits, she bitterly reflected, and he chatted about a great

many things. Somewhere in the midst of them, he did say, quite nicely:

"You've heard no doubt that I have my little girl with me? Ought to have done it long ago. You must let me bring her to you, Bell, when the chatter's died out. Poor lamb, she'll need a woman's help."

Isabel Champyon answered steadily that she'd be *so* glad if he would—and she was sorry for herself that she had to say it. She never realized the part she had herself played in her attack on Nick on the terrace at Trampen Park, of which Heriot heard every word.

There was another lady to whom this affair—unheard of a month before—was bringing pre-occupation and perplexity. Edith Traquair, while in London, trod the ways made so smooth and pleasant for persons with means and manners like her own, that is to say, she played about with all sorts of charming and gracious people, conscious of being herself one of the most charming and gracious among them. She had all the qualities which make a stranger popular in England, wealth, looks, smartness which was always well-bred, gayety which never lacked dignity, that quickness which the English find especially delightful. If she didn't move in Heriot's own set, yet her path ran well within view of it all the way along. And more and more was Edith astonished to find everybody standing, as it were, glasses to eyes, intently focussed on a certain group, of whom—to her supreme indignation—Denis, if you please, made one! This was altogether unexpected and undesired; for, that Denis should be to any degree absorbed by any country, any society, not his own, was altogether contrary to the ideas of his cousin Edith. Europe, to Mrs. John's mind, was not for such as he; it existed chiefly to furnish a stage and a background

—a flattering background—to that supreme protagonist, the American woman. Her business was to go there, to spend money there, to be admired and to be important, to feed the Armenian, to patronize the Czecho-Slovakian, to encourage the French dressmaker, to assist struggling and unemployed royalty. Men were better off at home furnishing the sinews of war (and it took some furnishing.) Europe was not today a man's continent, except artists and musicians; and they, everybody knows, are half female anyway. Edith would not have said so, but she probably thought that the War stopped so soon as American women gave it their serious attention.

Such was Mrs. John's doctrine, and it is the doctrine of many of her country folk. Art and culture, for some strange reason, are held in the United States to be the affair of the Eternal Womanly, and such is the creature's grace and ability, (to say nothing of her bank account,) that the entire world conspires to confirm her delusion. Yet it is a dangerous one and often productive of misunderstanding.

Edith's feeling about Denis, therefore, was one of grave uneasiness, which his manner did little to dispel; so that finally, when old Mr. Waghorn came to visit her, she took him into her confidence.

"What I cannot understand at all," said she, with her little emphases, "is why he stays on. I'm sure his father doesn't approve; he practically said so, yet, when I told Denis, he simply *waved* it away!"

She made a descriptive gesture with her slender hand, and her elderly friend looked grave. He admired Edith immensely, particularly her fair hair, and black hat, which was pierced by a small, sparkling arrow.

"You think his business with Lord Heriot isn't finished?" she asked.

"Oh no, I gather he brought it to a satisfactory conclusion some time since," the lawyer assured her.

"He told you so?"

"No: he hasn't told me anything," replied Mr. Waghorn.

"Well, it's true they thought he needed a change, though I can't say," Edith reflected, "that he looks the better for it. In fact, he's as thin as a rail. Do you suppose it's because Denis isn't feeling quite well, Mr. Waghorn, and so has been taking a rest?"

"Well, I shouldn't describe it as resting," said Mr. Waghorn.

"Then you haven't talked with him?" she persisted, playing with the pearls around her neck and looking as anxious as so pretty a woman can permit herself to look.

"I haven't talked with him recently; in fact I've scarcely seen him," Mr. Waghorn patiently assured her, putting his finger tips together. "I did at first, of course, frequently, but of late he's been so much absorbed by his noble friend——"

"But that's it—his noble friend! And *why* his noble friend?" she demanded, with raised eyebrows. "Surely, it's a very strange friendship? I don't happen to know Lord Heriot but I've seen him of course; everybody has, and I must say I should never have thought him *Denis's* kind of a person. There's his age in the first place—he must be close on seventy——."

"Sixty-nine," Mr. Waghorn corrected her.

"Well, that's close to seventy, isn't it? Denis was twenty-nine last September. Of course, I know many

people think Lord Heriot extremely fascinating and his appearance is very striking, but, if you ask me," Edith admitted critically, "I call him rather flamboyant and over-dressed. He doesn't look in the least like *you*, for instance, Mr. Waghorn!"

Mr. Waghorn inwardly gasped at her innocent comparison, but he thought well to observe vaguely: "Just so yes, No, I shouldn't say he did, in any respect whatever."

"Well, I simply cannot account for it. I don't approve of it!" she proceeded, in a final and authoritative accent. "It isn't suitable to my mind. And just now, when everybody seems to be talking about Lord Heriot! He was decidedly a wild person, it seems, when he was young. Immoral and all that; not the right influence for Denis, who's always been so carefully brought up, you know."

She was so slight and fair and well-dressed, so troubled in her clear, confident gaze, that the old solicitor felt sorry for her. At the same time he surveyed her finished little figure, with its crystalline self-assurance, in a sort of bewilderment. "What could her husband have been like?" he found himself wondering.

Meanwhile, Edith was waiting for some sort of contribution on his part and rather annoyed with his caution that it should respond only to direct catechism. But Edith was a clever young lady; she made it a point to avoid that habit of her countrywomen, who talk so fast and fluently and never listen for an answer. She waited with the prettiest attentiveness for the old gentleman's communication.

"Do let me have your theory," she asked graciously. Evidently one couldn't escape Mrs. Traquair.

"If you've been hearing the gossip of the moment, my dear young lady," her visitor began resignedly, "you've heard, no doubt, that Lord Heriot has a daughter——"

This was what Edith had dreaded; her fair skin flushed and her small mouth straightened into a firm line.

"So that's it!" said she, and the tone boded ill for her cousin. "You think Denis is interested in this—person? A sort of adventuress, if all that people say is true?"

"Mere speculation on my part, mere idle speculation," he hastened to assure her. "Your cousin has not confided in me."

"But you have a reason?" she demanded imperiously, and he was obliged to answer.

"Well, I saw them together in one of the parks, not long since; and I won't deny that I noticed a certain concentration——"

Mr. Waghorn paused, whether out of pity for Edith or pity for Denis, would be hard to say. His mind held a little, vivid picture of two young figures walking as though in Eden together, and he half-smiled, half-sighed at the recollection. But he respected the admirably judicious attitude of Mrs. John.

"If what you saw means anything serious, it would never do," she remarked at length. "Uncle James would be terribly disappointed. It's not what any of us expect from Denis. A stranger, illegitimate, and with the most curious parents!"

"Quite so. The young lady is not unlikely, they tell me, to have a large fortune," the other suggested.

"Money is the very last thing to be considered when it comes to marriage," was her serene reply. She

paused, but her companion made no comment upon this admirable idealism; so she went on to instruct him a little further.

"We think, at home, your commercial ideas of marriage are dreadful, you know. We have evolved a higher ideal since women are striving for development, Biological fitness, we think, mutual respect, and congeniality of taste, as well as love, are the only foundations of the true union."

Mr. Waghorn might have said a great many things but he said nothing.

"You must agree however, that this would be in every respect unfortunate?"

"I hadn't considered it—from these—er these elevated standards," he could only suggest. "You see, I know so little—maybe, being older, I'm a bit more tolerant. Biological fitness would not, I confess, have occurred to me," he spoke apologetically, "if only he isn't taken in! There have been rumors lately, disagreeable—very. But what can one do?"

"Do? Why, reason with Denis!" Edith said, and could not have been more zealously energetic. "I shall have it out with him, you may be sure. I have my duty and my moral responsibilities, you know. We are much less timid about exerting our influence for good in the States than you are here, you know, Mr. Waghorn!" she concluded, in her most serious and confident manner.

CHAPTER XXIII

DURING the remainder of Mr. Waghorn's visit, Edith was distracted by the thought of Denis's iniquity, and, after the old lawyer had taken his gently formal leave, she gave her mind wholly up to it. While dressing, she planned just how she should broach the subject and effectively pursue it with her cousin, yet not so as to spoil the evening they were to spend together. This was by no means easy, even if she could support her interference in his private affairs by reference to a seniority which she did not generally care to emphasize. So absorbed did she become in long, imaginary questions and answers, in her own overwhelming arguments, uplifting appeals and crushing retorts, that the telephone-bell came as a jarring interruption. In the act of picking up the instrument, Edith had a premonition that Denis was going to make an excuse and thus escape her; and so prepared was she for his voice on the wire, that it was with stupefaction she heard the accents of a stranger tell her that Mr. Traquair found himself far too unwell tonight to go out to dine. Questions, many and peremptory, elicited the information that he "was very bad, madam," and that a doctor had been sent for.

Now, Edith was the type that prides itself on coping with emergencies at short notice, being equally calm in front of fire, a surgical operation, or a journey to China at an hour's notice. While another would

have stood conjecturing, lamenting and irresolute, she had already stepped to her dressing-table, drawn off her rings and started to put on the frock she had just discarded. A brief order notified her maid to have her suit-case ready if necessary, and Edith even thought to slip on her rubber-heeled pumps and drop smelling salts and toilet water into her shopping-bag. She was dressed in an instant, almost in another she was talking to the porter at Brown's Hotel. Her appearance and manner were both so eminently practical as to overcome any hesitations. The housekeeper was summoned, and Edith was conducted to her cousin's room, together with the doctor who had just arrived.

Beyond a feeble greeting of "Hello, Edith!" poor Denis took no heed. He lay in a listless heap on his bed, and she noticed his face was darkly flushed. If Edith had any idea of reasoning with him, it was plain she must postpone it and give herself up to the needs of one actually, if, she hoped, not alarmingly ill. The doctor made his examination, wrote his prescription, but refused to commit himself. It was too early to tell the cause of so high a temperature; they would know more tomorrow. Certainly, someone should be at hand in case the patient was restless, and if the next room was available so much the better. He gave one or two directions and went away, leaving Edith in charge, not without the reflection that she was remarkably good-looking to be so very competent.

Mrs. Traquair telephoned her maid, despatched the prescription, received it and her bag when they came, gave Denis his dose, and put an iced bandage on his head, all before she took off her hat. The young man was too dulled by fever to talk, but he did look at her in a troubled sort of way and ask: "Edie, it's

so very good of you—oughtn't you to have your dinner?" And his cousin replied serenely: "You silly boy, I shall get my dinner by and by!"

Under the influence of the ice and the sedative, he seemed to sink into lethargy and, although his pulse, to her touch, was still racing, yet his expression seemed less strained and his breathing quieter. By this time, an adjoining bed-room had been made ready, so Edith put out the light and opened the door between, moving to and fro and straightening things up, before she put on her dressing gown to become his night nurse. The place was in a mess; Denis had evidently started to dress and given out; his clothes were everywhere and one of his studs had fallen on the floor. She put his letters into a drawer; she hung up his evening coat which lay on a chair near the bed. A small, white something fell from the inside pocket; her touch assured her that this something was no man's gear. Edith took it to the light in the next room; she stood turning it over.

A woman's handkerchief folded over a piece of note paper, worn with handling. This she opened, and her hands and heart grew cold. There were only a few words written and signed by an initial—only a few words: "My father did not wish me to tell anyone, but I cannot leave you that way. I am to stay quietly here for the present until I am used to everything. He is to come for the week end. Just now, I am quite bewildered. You were utterly right about him and I was utterly wrong. N."

Yes, Edith felt suddenly chilly and unsure. She stood staring at the initial, till she heard Denis call from the next room. She hurried in. He had

thrown off the compress and was sitting up, his eyes were dilated and anxious, his accent quick:

"What have you done with my coat? There was something in the pocket I wanted. Where is it?"

She knew what it was. Stooping as though to look, she rose and slipped the packet into his hand without a word. Denis took handkerchief and letter with a small sigh of relief, put them carefully under his pillow, touching them more than once to make sure they were within reach. Just so a child tucks away a cherished toy. Then he settled back more easily. He let her replace the compress and give him his second dose, he was very docile, and, turning, seemed to fall asleep. Edith went into the next room and came back in half-an-hour to look at him. From the doorway she could see the long outline of his resting body. It was tranquil. Yes, he seemed to sleep. Odd, how two separate consciousnesses could exist together; one wholly occupied with illness and the business of nursing; the other harrying her poor self about by the Furies armed with an initial. Edith moved upon the routine she held necessary, ate a little dinner from the tray which was waiting, made her preparations for the night, passing the time till the third dose was due, went in and renewed the compress, quickly, quietly, intelligently. Once or twice, Denis tossed and muttered; late in the night he cried out, and when she hurried in to him she found his forehead wet; after that he lay more quietly and slept profoundly, his hand under the pillow. Edith went back to bed and lay down but not to sleep.

She thought a great deal about John and their earlier married life; how much it had held and how little. She knew that John had never been happy, not for

an instant, from the hour he realized he could do no work; nor had she ever been able to make up to him for the lack of health and for the lack of children. She knew he blamed the last on the first and with increasing bitterness. When the War came and he could take no part, she knew he did not want to live, not even for her sake. Love of women, how little it meant to some men, how much to others! To Denis, she'd always felt it would matter tremendously. His instincts were protective. And now those instincts were to be directed—where?

So Edith lay and interrogated the night, whither we must all depart with our unanswered questions. Now and again she made sure her patient lacked nothing; but most of the slow hours moved by for her in this dismal sort of watching. When morning came and brought her maid, who remarked with concern on her bad night, Mrs. Traquair acknowledged that she had hardly slept, because she had really been very anxious.

Fortunately, Edith's anxiety was soon greatly lessened. Her cousin's attack was no more than a sharp summer influenza, never at any time uncommon in London, when fever runs high, though usually but for a few hours. The doctor found his patient improved, and as the day progressed, he became so much more like himself that he scouted the notion of needing a night nurse. Mrs. Traquair could go back to the Ritz, relieved in mind, for a good sleep, and thereafter limited her care to daily visits, during the week that the physician kept the young man in his room. Poor Denis was very grateful to Edith and spoke more than once of the trouble he was giving her. She did not fail to notice that he was constantly occupied with his

letter-case, which was always quickly closed when she came into the room. Once he did tell her that he was writing to his mother, but Edith knew very well that such a letter could not have taken him four days.

As for herself, beyond a bald, hasty note to tell them he had been ill and was convalescent, she felt unable to write the James Traquairs. There was too much to tell and too little; so she let it go, feeling heavy-hearted, but looking always alert, poised and pleased, as though she had no troubles in the world.

Other visitors came to see Denis. Mr. Waghorn was among the first and brought the soothing Spectator and the Quarterly Review. Friends of Edith's came to have tea with them, and, so soon as he learned what had occurred on his return from the country, Heriot came.

Edith did not expect this; her preconceived idea of Lord Heriot did not include sick-room visiting, and she made up her mind to excuse herself immediately. Truth to tell, she was a trifle piqued, Heriot had shown no curiosity about nor desire to meet her; why should she flatter him by remaining?

There was a stir of ceremony when he made his entrance, which he did characteristically, with perfect simplicity, carrying a red morocco case with a gold coronet, and followed by a footman bearing in a jar an entire branch of a rose-tree in full flower.

"'A Book of Verses underneath the bough'," was the first utterance of that round voice, "and me to read it to you. But what's this, eh? Took base advantage of my absence, did you, to run up an influenza?"

Edith didn't go, but thought better of it. The look in Denis's eyes at sight of his friend was real, and then Heriot wasn't what she expected after all. She

had looked for something studied and impressive, whereas he was gay, affectionate, and quaint, like a brilliant child, rather than an elderly Peer and poet. He was full of jokes with Denis which set them both to laughing; he had the most ingenuous way of assuming that he was Denis's own age! Edith wasn't used to this attitude among her elderly countrymen. When she avowed she had always thought the Highlands so romantic, his eyes glowed, he told anecdotes of his cotters, described the mound in his village that had a curse on it and interpolated into the talk diverting tales concerning Highland dress, which she assured him, she never believed was really worn.

"Kilts? Why, nobody at home ever wears anything else. I remember once now, when I was dinin' with the King of Denmark, there was an Old Gell, eighty-four she was, and Dame de Cour to the Queen. She sat next me and was aw'fly interested in my Gordon Highlander's red jacket, tartans and all. Asked what I'd on underneath and I told her 'Only me!' 'You don't mean to tell me,' says she, 'that those are your KNEES?' 'I do,' said I. She wouldn't believe me, but started investigatin', leavin' me stone-cold!"

On his part, Lord Heriot admired the fair young lady, whose frock was the shade of grey that enhances blonde coloring and who had a faint violet shadow below her eyes, which told of a becoming degree of concern in her cousin's illness. When this young lady smiled, she showed small white teeth, while, as for her feet and footgear, they made him positively lyrical! He felt so sympathetic toward her that when she withdrew he begged her to write Denis's family not to expect him for some time yet: "Tell them to make their

minds easy, for I'm a severe dis-cip-lin-a-rian!" He could not have been more engaging.

Perhaps it was natural, after she departed, that he took occasion, in his most ornate style, to rally Denis about her charms. When however, he saw Denis was annoyed, he opened the red leather case and for an hour read poetry aloud, verse not only his own, in a rich, lilting voice, with the zest and absorption of twenty. After a long while, he rose to go and stood graciously towering, patting the American on the shoulder; and the look Denis gave him gratified Heriot beyond measure. How could he know the words that repeated themselves over and over in the other's mind? "You were utterly right about him and I was utterly wrong?"

Thus the days of Denis's incarceration came to an end, in a period when he was a little shaky, but otherwise all right.

Edith was daily expecting, even dreading, that he would be asked to Trampen Park; when he wasn't, she was more surprised than her cousin. Heriot had no intention of having his tête-à-tête with his daughter interrupted; he was now reaping the fruits of his act, and indulging his paternal fondness as he pleased. To have Denis with them would be to introduce the contrast, perchance the rivalry, with youth. Not that he meant to keep his girl always to himself, far from it! Time enough in future to seek friends for her, nor did he even think of Denis as among these. Denis was *his* friend, whom he needed in London, and always whatever Heriot wanted he was accustomed to have. No invitation came from him; and Edith, at first relieved, became now disappointed because Denis needed a change. And then came a warm June night, when

she went out to dine and there heard some talk which caused her to feel that her serious remonstrance with her cousin could no longer be delayed.

"Denny," said she, more hesitating than was usual with her, "last night I heard something very disagreeable."

"Disagreeable?" he echoed, surprised. "Isn't Colonel Pendragon pleasant to his friends at dinner?"

"Of course, he is—he's very nice. It was the other man."

"What other man?"

"Major Kellynch."

He shrugged indifferently. "Major Tom? I'm surprised Pendragon asked him to meet you; I thought he had more sense."

"I knew him years ago, you see."

Denis glanced at her, interested. "You never told me. When?"

"One winter in New York,—nine—no, it's nearer ten years ago. We met him a good many times. John didn't like him, though."

"Naturally. Who could? I'd like to drop Pendragon a hint that he's the wrong sort for you, Edith, even in this easy land."

He spoke in the responsible manner she might have expected, but it gave her no satisfaction. She hurried on.

"Oh, that's nonsense; he was all right to me. But——"

"But?"

Edith prolonged the pause to study his face. They sat in her parlor. Denis had just taken his first real walk in the Green Park, and she had ventured, during their leisurely promenade, to broach the subject of his

return home. She had spoken rather confusedly about his father's wish and the benefits of a sea-voyage after the 'flu, but he had listened in silence. When pressed he replied vaguely that he supposed he must be thinking about it before long, and then broke off, to point out the iron hoops along the path which had so concerned Lord Palmerston. Edith could have shaken him. Now, as she watched his slightly abstracted look and knew what she must say, uncertainty gave her a novel sense of hesitation.

"Well, they fell to gossiping about Lord Heriot. People do, you know."

"They do, but you and I needn't!"

His eyes blazed suddenly and Edith was in despair; but she never lacked courage, she became crystal—clear and hard.

"Perhaps. Yet we can't overlook it, particularly when it comes from so near home as this man. He's the heir, you know."

"He's a rotter and a beast, everybody knows! I don't care what he said, or what he charged."

"Don't get so angry, Denny!" she implored. "I'm not asking you to believe him. Besides he didn't charge anything, openly; but he did insinuate very nasty things about Lord Heriot's daughter, or the girl who passes for his daughter."

"Well?" He had become curt and steely and fully awake at last. Maybe it was her chance.

"I don't want to go on if you feel it so much?"

"Never mind me. What did he say?"

"Nothing definite, you may be sure; he let the others do that, and then he grinned. Pendragon said it was an outrage to ruin a fine estate just to provide for a bastard—yes?"

"I didn't speak. Go on!"

"And someone else said Lord Heriot must have softening of the brain and couldn't the Law do anything? Then Kellynch acknowledged that he wasn't good friends with his uncle; he was too dull a chap, he supposed; but he hated to have the name dragged in the mud. He'd had a good deal to drink, of course, Denny,—you know how they do here so as not to show it,—I often marvel at them, don't you? But it made him talk, you know!"

"I know. Was that all?"

"—No, no. He said, 'I'm better than any lawyer I ever met and they may find it hard to oust me. I've already had overtures to make her an honest woman'—Oh, he did look so horrid when he said that, Denny! It all came back to me just how John felt about Major Kellynch. John never would tell me what he had heard—there was something. Other people knew, I think. That fall something had happened——"

She hurried into the latter part of her speech in order to cover the brutalities just repeated, but rather to her surprise she found Denis paying close attention. He seemed cool and self-possessed, he seemed strangely impersonal.

"I wish you could remember, Edith, what was said about him, what happened?"

"I know so little; there was something bad, but what John wouldn't tell me. We went out a good deal in New York that winter. Kellynch asked us to dine once but John wouldn't go. I heard talk outside—all very vague. Some men had gone off on Gerald Vincey's yacht and one of them drowned himself. Everything was hinted, the newspapers were choked

off somehow. They said this Kellynch man was one of the lot."

"I wonder if I couldn't find out something more definite," Denis observed, half to himself. This alert professional tone and manner continued to surprise his cousin. She saw no reason why he should be more interested in Major Kellynch's past history than in the outrageous matters she had just conveyed and she began to draw hope from the fact. Perhaps he wasn't as much in love with the girl as she had feared.

"You might find out something," she suggested, "from old Mr. Peter Vincey. I met him yesterday on Bond Street. He's at Claridge's, on his way to Aix. He's Gerald's uncle, and I think they were all of them rather relieved when Gerald was killed in the Ar-gonne."

"Thank you: it's a good suggestion. I shall see him at once."

Was he going to leave her with no more said? Somehow the conversation had petered out, or at least he had succeeded in dominating it. Edith had not maintained the position she had intended. She did not mean that Denis should evade her just remonstrances. Again she made an effort to recapture her habitual admonitory self-assurance.

CHAPTER XXIV

"NEEDLESS to say," she observed, nor could she have been more sisterly, more final, "Major Kellynch and his affairs are not the point. I suppose you realize that I didn't tell you about what occurred last night in order to discuss Major Tom Kellynch and his past?"

"Yes, I quite realize it, quite." His calmness and the Briticism together, nettled his cousin. Yet she concealed it; she made a marked effort that her appeal should not be weakened by these small personal resentments. Her voice, it is true, trembled a little.

"I mention it because it brought home to me what I too felt all along, that these people are not really your sort of people, and that it's a mistake to let yourself get too intimate with them." She waited, but Denis made no answer, he continued to stare out of the window. "I don't mean—Lord Heriot's charming and distinguished, I know, but it seems to me you've lost your head about him. He's not your sort—our sort. That was the thing which worried me in the gossip last night; you, I mean, you in all this, Denny. Why should you be so affected? You were never the kind to be carried away because a title is friendly to you. And yet you think of nothing else but him, but them. He and this—this dreadful girl. What are such people to you?"

"My friends, Edith."

"Oh, Denny!" she could only protest, and again, "Oh Denny!" helplessly and sorrowfully.

As for Denis, he sat turned toward her with that courteous, attentive, yet removed manner, which made Edith feel as though she were in a lawyer's office. His eyes strayed around the room and seemed to notice it particularly for the first time. There were panels of striped pink silk framed in grey trim, and there was a screen of the same, with a top of varying curves. There was a Louis XV clock and andirons; the chairs had seats imitated in *petit point*. Edith had scattered about her own books, photographs and vases of flowers. It was all so deliberately and exultantly correct, the proper setting, at so many guineas a day, for luxurious living. It had not come about and grown and faded, as the real thing does, but was copied and assembled by expert knowledge to please fastidious demand. This demand and all it stood for of life shallow, material, he suddenly found himself hating. Then he turned his gaze to Edith's anxious, waiting figure and looked at the hands folded together in her lap. They were bony, transparent hands, with one or two superb rings on them; they set him to dreaming of Nicole's hands, long, warm and smooth, with an electric spark in the palm, which at his touch lit the flame in her eyes.

Edith saw he was not going to commit himself or aid her in any way. Yet she spoke gently: "Are you thinking about what I said, Denny? You've not answered me?"

"I'm thinking," he replied, still in a somewhat cool and meditative tone, "how strange it is that women like you will believe the lies that are told them by men they dislike and distrust. Oh, it's not you only, I've

often noticed it. You see, I know so much more about Lord Heriot's daughter than Major Kellynch can; and you too, Edith, know more."

"I, Denny? I never saw her to my knowledge."

"Oh, yes, you did, you saved her life as a matter of fact. Don't you remember the girl I pulled out of the water one summer, ten years ago? You rubbed her alive on the kitchen floor."

She looked entirely bewildered. "You mean—that child?"

"That was she, that was Nicole," his voice caressed the name. Then, in order to ward off other questioning, he went on quickly: "So, you see, I've known, for quite a long time, what other people haven't. That summer, on the Island, she told me a good deal. From the first, here in London, I knew she was really Heriot's daughter and the rest was a lie. I always thought it would end as it has, that he'd acknowledge her. I've hoped for it. They need each other. So you see, there was a reason for my being so interested."

She felt that now was her chance. She spoke quickly, although she sounded strained and weary:

"But now, now it has come about as you wished, you'll go home, won't you, Denis? I don't understand it all, but then how should I? Your absorption in these people whom you've known such a short, short time." Her tired voice crept on regretfully. "I told you, only you wouldn't listen, that Uncle James wasn't at all pleased at your staying. Why, even if what you say is true, they are not the sort of people to do you any good. You know how we all feel about you, that you have a career at the Bar ahead if you'll work for it. You've always seemed so interested in that. Uncle

James would be terribly upset if anything turned you away from it."

"What should turn me?" he said. "If you mean am I going to live here? Edith, that's ridiculous; what could I live on?"

He rose as he spoke, smiling and holding out his hand. He handled her, that was it! No other word would do. He handled her, so that he needn't answer, he needn't tell her anything. And as for the personal appeal, he simply ignored it. He seemed so much older, Edith felt deeply humiliated and bewildered.

Not until she had returned to her chair after the door closed on Traquair, did all she might have said and might have asked rush into her mind. There was so much he had not told her: what Major Kellynch meant, and why Denis wanted information concerning him, how he had first become possessed of the confidence of Heriot's daughter and what had been his rôle in the drama of the last few weeks? Yet why should she seek to know more? Had not the main question of all, the one she had not asked, been fully answered?

Mrs. John was too much a woman of the world to open the subject again. When her cousin came in the next time, she was much as usual, nor did she ever show him the bitterness of personal failure which their conversation had involved for her. Traquair, perhaps, was not surprised when she told him that she was finding England warm and tiresome and had decided to go to Paris and Dinard, and later, to Biarritz. She did not suppose he would come along, "being so wrapped up in your new friends." Denis smiled that amiable but baffling smile, which she had noticed frequently of late, and insisted then and there, she should call up her acquaintance, Mr. Peter Vincey—whom he had never

met—to arrange an interview. She could not see the point of it; she could not visualize in any shape the danger which Traquair's quick instinct had read in Major Kellynch's vindictive gossip. But she did what her cousin wished; she told herself she was done with the whole matter; and, when a charming invitation to dine came from Heriot (who thought it would please Denis), she was glad to be able to sit down and write her regrets that she was leaving for the Continent.

Meanwhile, Denis found his compatriot at Clarridge's, in the midst of packing and arranging a journey to his cure at Marienbad. Mr. Vincey didn't wish to be interrupted, but Edith Traquair had been insistent, so the caller was shown into a sitting-room whose occupant came forward to greet him immediately. At first sight of him, Denis's heart sank; he seemed far too much of a nervous dilettante to be of any real use. This member of a well-known American family was a thin, white-moustached gentleman, who looked older than he was, although he was old enough, as he told his visitor, to have just completed his forty-first voyage across the Atlantic. The Vinceys, as everybody knows, are a Virginia family; but all money tends sooner or later to gravitate to New York and they now held the latter city to be their home. Mr. Vincey was unmarried and a great diner-out. He had pleasant tastes, a gentle, not to say idle disposition, and a remarkably fine collection of carved Chinese crystals. Of course he had not the remotest idea to what he owed "the pleasure" as he put it, "of the present visit." He regarded Traquair with a touch of curiosity, having heard of the young man's personal success in London and of the odd friendship which had sponsored him.

A thin, rather intense young man, Mr. Vincey thought, with a very agreeable, tactful manner; but with just a hint of concentration in it that warned of purpose, a manner which generally meant that somebody wanted something. In his youth, Mr. Vincey had undertaken his share of the business responsibilities which the Vincey interests demanded, for both the family and the fortune were very large, but an experience as guardian of his brother's son had given him a strong dislike of the affairs of others. That young man's career had been a perpetual embarrassment and humiliation, although, since his death in the Argonne, his family spoke of him as a reformed man. Before then they had not been so certain.

Now, there was no subject on earth which Mr. Vincey less desired to recall and discuss than the episode of his nephew's cruise in the summer of 1910. At the first hint of it his face fell and his manner suggested that he regretted his cordial welcome to this pleasant member of the Traquair clan. To a person of Mr. Vincey's age, tastes and background, the whole of that incident had been one long nightmare, since it had served to bring him into daily contact with two forces which it had been his passion all his life to avoid, namely the Law and the newspapers. Moreover the cruise of the yacht "Angèlique" had come as the culmination of a long series of annoyances, to which a worthless and dissipated young man can subject his dignified family. When it terminated in a painful tragedy, followed by legal developments of the most disagreeable nature, involving the notoriety of families to whom there was no greater trial than that newspaper mention which served to place them on a level with families less scrupulous, everyone connected

therewith had suffered. Mr. Vincey couldn't contemplate that time without a shudder.

It was not the recorded facts of the case which he wished to keep, or felt he could keep, hidden. These were not complicated. The fool who owned the yacht, together with a second fool, younger, and even weaker than himself, had deliberately invited, as their guests on board, a couple of hard-bitted, transcontinental black-legs. Both the former remained continuously drunk for all of three weeks and there had been more than a suspicion that the guests had found them apt pupils in the use of certain drugs. Important sums of money had changed hands during the voyage, now on one side, now on the other; it had been hard to say who had come out ahead, on the August night when the younger boy threw himself overboard in a state of shattered despair. Naturally Gerald Vincey, who owned the yacht, and his companions, who voyaged on enquiry from the authorities. Accusations and counter-enquiry from the authorities. Accusations and counter-accusations were made by everybody, not excepting the crew; while the family of the dead boy did their best to make a martyr of him, in which they were hardly successful. The scandal was hushed up as well as it could be and a good deal of money was reported to have been paid, in various quarters, toward that end. Gerald Vincey was ostracized and remained out of sight, until the Great War brought him to an eminently satisfactory death early in 1918.

All this was, of course, a matter of record and Mr. Peter Vincey could not well withhold it from Denis Traquair; but he looked so miserable while telling it, his bushy white eye-brows moved so plaintively up and down, that it was a triumph for the younger man's

firmness and tactful suavity to be able to bring it to the surface at all. The affair, Mr. Vincey declared, had made him ill for months afterwards. He'd tried his best to forget, nor would anything have induced him to recall it but the high regard he felt for his friend Mrs. John Traquair. The identity, therefore, of the other members of the cruise,—their names and the part played by them during its most lurid events, was one which had to be approached and handled with special skill; particularly as Denis wanted to catch the reactions, the suspicions and the attitude in general of everybody during that period.

"Yes, yes, there were other guests," Mr. Vincey admitted, "the party numbered six during most of the cruise. One man, I recall, left the ship at Rockland, before it all happened and very glad he was afterwards, as he told me. I met him later on the street; he offered to testify, but when they found he'd left before, naturally they let him off easily. The five others stayed on board throughout—but need we dwell on this hateful business any longer?"

His eyes strayed past his visitor to the clock, as he asked this leading question.

"Indeed, it's too bad," Traquair observed sympathetically, "that I should have to be the one to recall it to you. But you'll understand and forgive me when you know," he smiled with a frankness the elder man found it hard to resist. "It's so important to me to know all I can discover about that incident. You see, there's an individual in London who's making himself disagreeable towards a very important family, Mr. Vincey,—one that dreads publicity as much as you do. Now, I have more than a suspicion he's that man and

I want to bring my knowledge before the proper quarter."

"Well, then?" Vincey asked resignedly. In truth, Traquair's remarks had aroused his curiosity, much as Traquair had hoped since his entrance into Mr. Vincey's room, when his glance had immediately alighted on a pile of books lying on the table among which Whittaker's Handbook of the Peerage, Baronetage and Companionage was conspicuous. Denis judged, and rightly, that Mr. Vincey's interest in and respect for family would induce him to be sympathetic toward any such whose situation and difficulties in any sense resembled that of the Cavalier Vincneys—a proud clan in a proud state. So to his compatriot's question, he replied by giving further and more convincing reasons for his inconvenient enquiry. Unfortunately, as the elder man avowed, what he lacked was knowledge.

"Kellynch? Kellynch?" he repeated, thoughtfully tapping his chair-arm with his shell-rimmed spectacles. "No, I can't say the name means anything particular to me. You mean that rather loud, raffish sort of chap, the heir of Lord Heriot and St. Helier's? The poet, of course, I've heard of; in fact I've had letters to him in the past, but once I knew he didn't care for Americans, I didn't present them, naturally. We Vincneys, you know, would never wish to make the first move toward a man with that prejudice—we'd never put ourselves in such a position. But that I needn't tell you, I know," said the New Yorker courteously.

"So I really can't say. I'm pretty sure, however, that Kellynch was not the name of either of the men chiefly concerned in the case; the two, who were found to have had records, I mean. I know it wasn't the fellow who left the yacht at Rockland, he was a

New York man like myself. But the sixth man I did not know and had no talk with, so far as I remember. He testified at the inquest of course, like the others, and I do seem to recall, now that you raise that horrid ghost again, hearing it said he was an Englishman of position."

"But he didn't figure, so far as you know?"

"He didn't figure, or rather," said Mr. Peter Vincey, "he wasn't the prime mover in the scheme to victimize the two boys, for scheme it must have been, despite denials."

"What do you think, down in your boots, such a scheme really involved?" asked Denis, giving him plenty of time and speaking in that off-hand manner which gave only the desired oblique emphasis to the whole affair.

"It's hard to say positively. I asked Gerald in confidence and he could only tell me with contrition that he'd been drunk so much of the time, he had the most hazy idea of what had passed," narrated Mr. Vincey, in a plaintive, dreamy manner which Denis was careful not to interrupt. "There had been heavy play, I remember, and he and Gordon lost for awhile steadily to the tune of thousands; then they did better and Gordon appeared to win largely. It seems that at the end of an all night sitting, the two men pounced on the boy, with accusations which, Gerald told me, drunk as he was, appeared to him serious. It was then the row occurred, when they offered to let Gordon buy himself off; and after his debauch was over, the lad found himself ruined."

Vincey made a gesture with his thin hand and then put it to his face, which Denis saw was drawn with retrospective pain. Clearly, one could not push the

matter, so he rose to take leave, with a quiet withdrawal that caused the other to feel grateful and cordial. This feeling deepened when the younger man mentioned the fact that Mrs. Traquair was travelling to France in a day or so and was likely, he thought, to be alone. Vincey, who loved the society of pretty women, found this information cheering and shook Denis kindly by the hand, never reflecting that the latter had not, after all, given him any very definite reason for the visit. Denis left him and wandered into the Park, to dream, to plan. He had obtained certain addresses from the New Yorker and he must consider how best to make use of them.

He was dressing in his room that evening when the telephone summoned him. By the pauses, the fuss and the buzzing it could be nothing but a trunk call and the moment Denis knew that, he knew it was a message longed-for, if hardly expected. He shook the hook and admonished and entreated the operator; till by and by a voice, faint and clear and far away, like a falling star—Nick's voice!—came to him out of the confusion.

"Mr. Traquair, are you there? Mr. Traquair, is it you?"

"Yes, yes, it is I! (keep me connected, please!) Yes, I am here."

A happy pause and then—

"How are you? I heard you had been ill?"

"I am quite all right now, thank you. Did you get my letter?"

"Yes, oh yes, but listen, you mustn't—you mustn't write so many and such long ones, you know! My Father will see, and," her tone was a thought tremu-

lous, "I ought to give my attention all to him now, ought I not? It's little enough to do."

"I suppose so."

"You were quite right, you know! He is so dear!"

"I am very, very glad—so you are now quite happy?"

"Ye-yes—except that I am ashamed for what I felt and said, you know and besides,—could you possibly come down and see me tomorrow?"

"Of course I can."

"You are sure you are strong enough?"

"Oh that was nothing. When shall I come?"

"Take the afternoon train and go to the Heriot Arms. I'll write there and tell you when to come up to the house. Something troubles me, yes,—I need to talk to you, if it isn't too much to ask you to come so far—"

"It would be nothing, even if it were the North Pole."

She said "Thank you! I shall expect you" and the operator's chilly voice came in to quench the vibration that he almost seemed to feel in the warm current of her words. He hung up and turned away exhilarated. What mattered anything now in the world? She needed him, she had sent for him, she had acknowledged that his letters were a disturbance to her mind.

Denis dressed whistling, and went off to dine with Heriot, who said he was glad to see his young friend looking so fit once more. The next day he saw Edith off in the morning by the Paris Express and did not even notice the tepid nature of her cousinly farewells. The last he saw of her she was companioned by Mr. Vincey and followed by a mountain of baggage. She smiled pleasantly, but with some preoccupation at him as she turned away.

CHAPTER XXV

"That which is crooked cannot be made straight; and that which is wanting cannot be numbered."

NICK, meanwhile, found herself helpless in the grip of the primal relations of life. She was disoriented as the traveller, who, having gazed from a distance on some favored valley, finds himself unexpectedly in its midst and looks bewildered for the land-marks he had noted from afar. Nothing was as she thought it; proportions were changed, as were relative values; she looked about her vaguely, as in a dream.

The dream began when she arrived at Trampen Park, to be welcomed by the housekeeper, Mrs. Maudrey. As Nick slowly limped upstairs toward her accustomed quarters on the third floor, the woman checked her. "His Lordship wrote that these were to be your rooms, Miss," she remarked, and guided Nick into the main corridor, to a door near that of Heriot's own suite. Nick knew the rooms well; they consisted of a bedroom, dressing-room and small sitting-room, whose window looked upon the south terrace and the rose-garden, set in the hedges of green. The furniture was a painted 18th century set, charming in coloring and delicate in taste, which the present lord had picked up in France and particularly admired. Flowers were everywhere, while one of the housemaids, that cheerful little Barbara whom Nick had always liked, came forward with joyful *empressement* to act as her maid.

Nick noticed with surprise that the girl wore a uniform, dress and apron, in the most brilliant colors.

"His Lordship sent these down, Miss," she told her mistress, with a shy smile which apologized for her master's eccentricity. 'She mustn't see anything around her hereafter, that isn't gay and young,' he said, 'she must live in a flower-garden, henceforth.' Those, Miss, were his very own words." And again the girl smiled as she smoothed deprecatingly, the rose-colored folds of her skirt.

Other evidence of Heriot's somewhat temperamental interest were to be noted and his daughter found herself astonished in considering his sudden change of front. A letter from him lay on her dressing-table. He suggested that she rest quietly and that, until gossip died down, she remain within the Park gates. He hoped that his orders for her comfort would be carried out; he was sending books and so on to occupy her solitude; and he expected to come down and be with her for the week-end. These words, in their note of joyous unconcern, as if she had been absent on a journey and had just returned—caused her throat to tighten, although why, she could not have told. Perhaps it was their simplicity.

The second missive was one of the familiar big blue envelopes containing an intimation from Mr. Marrindon that she was hereafter to receive, in lieu of salary, an allowance of which he begged to enclose a cheque for the first quarter. Nick stared at the cheque; the sum was unbelievably large. She put it away and sat for an instant, wondering why her sense of expectancy left her so unsatisfied. Then she realized that she had looked for yet another letter and that, not finding it, she felt a chill. Her maid, a little troubled by the

white face, the bewildered eyes, urged her to rest. Nick, abstractedly consented. She lay on a long chair drawn near to the open window, through which came to her fresh country air, a song of birds. Very still the lovely room. All the spacious house was hushed because she was queen there. She lay, she waited; her pulses stirred a little, then slackened—for she waited in vain. Where was the thrill, the intoxication of her triumph? Where, indeed?

Nervously and physically, the girl speedily felt the benefits of this luxurious rest, the country air, the change of surroundings, the quiet. As her ankle strengthened she took rambles through the Park, and enjoyed hour after hour out of doors, reading and dreaming. The whole establishment now began to revolve about her as about a central pivot; she savored to the full the sense of self-importance which (she knew) had been her ultimate goal. Every-time the carrier came, he brought gifts from London which her father had chosen, the type of gifts which expressed the light in which he now regarded her. Heriot had all along been apt to drop little presents in her path, but they had always been suitable to Miss Grannet, and not at all the sort of thing which he now held proper for the Hon. Nicole Kellynch! The dressing-case with beautiful fittings, the hand-bag with its jewelled clasp and monogram, the row of pearls, the exquisite ring, these were all tokens and signs manual of her success. She *was* Miss Kellynch (if not the Hon. Nicole). She had triumphed; she was to be rich, sheltered, considered; and she began even to feel that, carried on this sweeping current of fortune, a miracle might happen, some neglected or forgotten path might

open to legitimation, she herself in time might come to be Heriot and St. Helier's.

"It's wonderful!" she told herself, repeated, reiterated—"it's all I asked—of course I'm very happy. But am I very happy? Am I? Am I?"

Humiliating the discovery that the joy which should have come from all these things was, by caprice of Fate, actually brought only by the postman. Denis's letters! Wonderful, long, close out-pourings, "written from prison" as he gaily called it, written about himself, herself, herself, himself—two cosmic and encyclopedic topics; letters on the lightest pretext, yet never transient or ephemeral, letters for this moment, for last week, for next year; letters saying everything, expecting everything, yet asking nothing; letters to read, to re-read, to re-re-read, till they fell to pieces from much unfolding, only to be suddenly thrust away in indignation because Miss Kellynch was bestowing on them such disproportionate attention. Once in a fit of vexation at herself, she crumpled the intrusive sheets, thrust them away into a table-drawer, determined to read them no more. Night came. She lay on her bed, while her room was filled with star-light and young moon-light from a little crescent that swung, low down over the near-by trees. Soft airs wandered in, heavy with perfume, and fresh from stretches of garden and lawn; aromatic breathings of summer and blossoming nature. The girl lay sleepless, lay and tossed, dozed and roused, stirred with delicious, excited uneasiness, breathing too quickly, her troubled eyes interrogating the sky. And swiftly, inevitably, she knew what ailed her; she rose, thrust her arms into her dressing-gown, opened her door, slipped like a slim ghost through the sleeping house, down-stairs, across

the hall, drawn by some hypnotism to the table-drawer. Anxiety rose and suffocated her. Suppose somebody had found the letter, taken or destroyed it? Her hand groped frantically in the drawer till it encountered the stiff paper. She let out a long, long sigh of relief. As she crept noiselessly, back upstairs to her room, her eyes gleamed in the dark, her lips were parted. Safe behind her locked door, she must look once, just once, to see that the very words were there she had remembered; then dropped gladly into her bed again, with hand touching the envelope under the pillow, (as Edith Traquair had seen Denis do the week before) and fell at once into a happy sleep.

She woke, to Barbara and the breakfast tray, smiling at the gay, beflowered, quaintly-clad figure as it flitted around the room.

"You do look so much better this morning, Miss!" Barbara told her admiringly. "Your eyes are just as bright. Will you put on your white embroidered frock, Miss, seeing as his Lordship expects to be coming down for lunch?"

No, she must not look back upon the night, whose memory seemed to smile on her day, yet she must wonder that besides the joy of Denis's letter, any joy in her triumph was so pallid that one forgot it was a triumph. His Lordship came, again Nicole was disconcerted. His attitude didn't brighten her victory a whit, but rather detracted from it. The bright singleness of his feeling toward her cast a shadow over the complexity of her's toward him. Of all the things Nick had anticipated, *this* was the one she had never expected—that Heriot should give her warm affection and that she should return it!

"Les désirs accomplis."

Why couldn't Fate give you your desire, without making you ashamed of having it? Or why give it you—just *after* you found that what you really wanted was something quite different? Others beside poor Nick have asked this question. The stupidly affectionate people who refuse to use their intelligence, are always facing some crisis which intelligence would have handled while affection was useless or worse; while the carefully cold and detached people, who are determined to let no human weakness interfere with the mastery of their souls, are always finding that detachment detaches and that fewer and fewer friends come within the circle of their influence. We all get what we ask for in this life, except the incompatible things that we really want.

Nick had supposed herself unchangeably bitter toward her father; she had seen through him, she thought; she had been cynically resistant of his charm, she had been disillusioned about him. She had foreseen herself, cold, accepting to the end; she would never forget the selfish injustice which had given her life. She would handle him intelligently and for the rest be quite impersonal. They would be good friends no doubt, but quite impersonal—the one toward the other.

And then, he had entered; he had greeted her so joyously, had thrust a bunch of roses into her hand, had said "I thought you needed roses, my dear, but they're growing in your cheeks already!"

He had dropped his hand ever so lightly on her shoulder as she passed and his air of acceptance of her into her new place had been complete. What an utter irony that all she'd schemed for—luxury, position, consideration, should turn out to be of so little

real importance beside the normal relation, the normal affection, the love of this strange being, who in so selfishly giving her life, had given her also so much of himself that her own nature involuntarily responded to his! It would have been so much easier *not* to love Heriot, but who could help loving him? She had thought herself so modern, so cool, so independent of natural instinct. Yet it grew on her that this biological tyranny can be successfully resisted only at the sacrifice of that strange essential to human existence known as happiness.

No doubt some people are who have been able to detach themselves from the ties of blood, but they do so at heavy cost, and Nick's inheritance of emotion did not permit her to be among them, nor was her nature one to be permanently dominated by artificial controls. Purpose, vindictiveness, cold aloofness,—these were not her natural air, though she had breathed them for so long, now a fresh wind blew, and they were as though they had never been. Denis had said; "You think yourself one person when you are really another. Being the person you really are, you need only the warmth of nature!" and Denis was right as usual. Terrified, she faced a new personality. The rightness of Denis was but another weapon in the armoury of Destiny.

As to Heriot, his attitude was simplicity itself. In acknowledging his daughter, he had, as usual pleased himself. In this case as in others in his life, his feelings had been subject only to the control of convention and he had merely substituted one convention for another. That this new idea of family life jumped with his inclination was obvious and he had never in his life suppressed his inclinations. Fatherly affection

and pride grew rapidly dominant, past cautions and expedients were soon left far behind. He never looked back, he looked only forward to the interest and companionship he had gained. At times, Nicole could hardly believe the extent of his oblivion.

"He has forgotten *everything*," she thought in stupefaction, as she looked at her gay companion, "his responsibility, maman's death, my childhood among those dreadful people—the night I came,—everything.—He never even glances at the Past—he hasn't a shade of hesitation!"

"No; Heriot had no hesitations, no shadow of regret for past neglect, no self-consciousness. His *grand seigneur* assurance, his sense of special privilege, these restrained him from showing his daughter the mood he had once shown Denis. She was there, his Nicole, young, handsome, his own; he had needed her and now he had her, and there, for Heriot, the matter began and ended.

Meanwhile, he wished to make her happy and was perfectly confident of doing so. The suggestion made by Denis of her past loneliness touched his heart, for like most self-centered, sophisticated people, Heriot was extremely sentimental, and from the moment he took Nicole as it were into that centre, he could not do enough for her. From his household he exacted scrupulous deference toward her, as if she had been his legitimate heir. She must have this and that; it must be thus and so.

The morning after his arrival, she was summoned to the stables and there found him, wearing tweeds and a cap, flower in button-hole and pipe in mouth, in consultation with his head-groom about a mount for her. His own hunter, a spirited shining creature, danced and

shifted on the bricks beside him, twitching its ears. When the girl came up to stroke its soft nose, her father's look was delighted.

"We'll be going out together," he told her nodding, "you'll soon stick on—a chip of the old block, eh, Miss Kellynch? I hated to give up hunting, but now I've someone to ride with I shan't mind."

During the first day or so, it amused him to call her 'Miss Kellynch' until she implored him to stop, "for how can I possibly call you anything but 'my lord' she said, reproachfully, "while you do so?" and Heriot chuckled.

"Do you remember the tale of the Merry Monarch, my dear? God rest his soul, he had a pretty wit and wit in Sovereigns is a superfluous grace. Nelly Gwynne it seems, called her little son by no gracious term, to speak to his father, 'Nay, Nelly,' Charles said, being a soft-hearted immoralist, 'do not give the child such a name,' Ye recall her answer, maybe, for 'tis pertinent—? 'Your Majesty has given me no other name by which I may call him'."

"I prefer your other 'Nick-names,'" she gave him quick reply, although, she marvelled at the anecdote. But his teasing habit went on as they grew more at ease together. Miss Kellynch gave way to Nicodemus and Nicotine, and finally by a fine touch of literary imagination, turned Nicoletta into Nicallegra and persisted in it—with no shade of consciousness that the allusion might hurt.

He would sit in his chair and watch her flying about, with a smile that lighted his face into a new beauty.

"Are you happy, my Nicallegra?"

"Yes, father—if only you would not call me that!"

"Why not—if it makes you the more my own?"

The days were stirred for him by old memories and new emotions. Her beauty delighted him and as he watched her, he looked once more down the clear corridor of the Past . . . He was the least demonstrative of men, but once he kissed her gently on the cheek and vividly there returned to him a moment when he had entered a room, to see the tall figure of a young woman standing in the full sunlight of a window and holding a bundle in her arms. He had hurried to clasp them both and the fragrance of that embrace was still in his nostrils. Then, on her laughing command, he had buried his face greedily against that tender warmth. Heavens! How near he had come to missing all that was left to him of those exquisite memories!

As the two became friends, talk between them grew easier and many things were touched on. Instinctively, Nick waited for a name to be spoken. Then—

"My lad has been ill," Lord Heriot informed her, during their rambles over lawn and garden together. This was on his second visit, after he had been to see Traquair, and Nicole thought it wise only to venture an enquiring, cautious "Ah?"

"Oh, nothing to signify—but he'll be sailing away to his own country soon, I fear. I like him heartily, Poppet; you never did him justice."

"Did I not?"

"Confess now, you women are as jealous as the Deil! You saw me liking him and felt left out in the cold, didn't you?"

"Perhaps I did, a little." She was not sorry that this answer was the truth.

"And here am I, doited old wife, with two of ye on my hands," he smiled teasingly. "That lad belongs to me in spirit. He'll go home; but he'll be back. We

will be having him at Whins one of these days—him and his wife too.”

She stabbed him with a sudden glance.

“Oh, didn’t I tell you? Just so; well, I saw it coming. Pretty widow, blonde as wheat, dressed in France, rollin’ in dollars. Yes, my dear, I guessed. She’ll marry him, the widow will. There she was lookin’ after him, soothin’ his pillow ‘ministering angel thou,’ you know!”

Nicole kept silence, feigning absorption in the grasses she was arranging and her father, reflecting that she was still perhaps a trifle jealous of his interest in the American, was not displeased. He changed the subject, suggested that the Continent and Italy would be a pleasant change for her during the following winter and evoked then and there, with a descriptive phrase, Paris, Rome, Venice and Carcassonne. Who could help loving him? She asked this of herself as his shining gaze sought to bring light into the sombreness of her’s.

They returned to the house, she slipped away and going to her own room, stood by the open window but with eyes not seeing. Happy? How could she be happy with this profound shame for past feelings and acts poisoning her days? Her bitterness, her disloyalty, how could she forgive herself for them? With the intensity which was her’s by nature she felt she could bear the burden of her victory only by dedicating herself to the future. She cried out inwardly that she would give her life wholly to her father in atonement, she would never leave him. She would sacrifice to his least whim, every wish, every hope of her own. Alas, she had something now to sacrifice and something vital!

As for Heriot, he went back to London, profoundly

satisfied with life. This contact with youth was what he had needed to stimulate his powers. During the week he wrote the three tiny lyrics, "Aucassin to Nicolette" which crystallise, as almost no poet has done, not even Hugo, the deep sense of delighted fatherhood. When he went to see Isabel Champyon his manner was very glorious.

"I saw your young American the other day" she remarked. "He is staying on, it seems. I suppose he is likely henceforward to make his home in England?"

"And why should you suppose so?"

"Naturally, when you take such an interest in him and have given him the entrée—they're always crazy about such things, the Americans."

Her tone jarred him, undoubtedly, he had lost his taste for this middle-aged spite. "But why should any active young man wish to live in the England of the moment?"

He spoke haughtily. She should not have misread his Denis and he taught her so.

"Oh, my dear Ian!" Lady Champyon murmured in deprecation.

"Denis, I assure you has his career awaiting him in his own country. You're surely not so blind, Bell, as to think that an energetic youth prefers, to a world that is his to make, one that is only his to bury?"

She felt resentment and showed it. "I see no reason, even with a Labor Government in prospect, you should feel so, but I have no wish to vex you."

"You cannot vex me, except that I never admired our class's stodgy self-satisfaction. We are all growing old."

That St. Helios should take her up like that! . . .

Isabel Champyon reflected with tears in her eyes. They had got him between them evidently and they had ruined him, the bastard and the Yankee. They had ruined him. This was what came of picking one's friends from the Outer Ward.

CHAPTER XXVI

IN THE warm sunset of a July day, Abdy, the landlord of the Heriot Arms, sat contemplatively with his pipe on a bench before the door. From this position he could survey his kingdom of the inn-yard, the dish-pans drying in a shiny row, the gay geraniums in the window-boxes on the gallery, the old dog dozing at his feet. Beyond lay the village street and, beyond that again, the descending slope of a hill and the stretch of western sky. This sky was pale, filled with enormous clouds spreading white and stately, like ships under full sail. They gathered slowly at the approach of sunset, whose rays defined and modelled their outlines with strokes of rose and gold and so hung a great drop-curtain over the distant plain.

Mr. Abdy belonged to the more meditative type of his class, but he was shrewd and observant and at the moment it was not the familiar pageant of a summer sunset which most interested him. His eyes rested on the bright motor-car which stood a few yards off, sleek and shining, waiting to be rubbed down like a favorite hunter. His thoughts were occupied with the owner thereof and with the incidents of the earlier afternoon, so that he was moved to take his pipe out of his mouth, and to look at it hard before replacing it. Then he put both hands upon his knees and slowly shook his head. Two notes, on the same day from

the Great House to be delivered to two gentlemen, well! well!

Abdy had handed them over in person according to instructions and he recalled how, when he had slowly produced one of those envelopes, the recipient's eyes had leapt to the handwriting. But the other? Abdy found himself still speculating on the expression of the owner of the shiny motor-car. Two notes, two gentlemen! It made one rather more inclined to believe some of those stories and rumors which had come down to St. Helier's along with the newly-acknowledged daughter of its lord.

"She be a rare one, no doubt," was Abdy's admiring, if unspoken comment,—“a shoot of the old stock, a fruit of the old tree, she be!” he reflected and once more, he shook his head.

About half-an-hour after sunset, Major Kellynch appeared in the inn-yard to give some direction concerning his car, which had now been cleaned and stowed away in a neighboring shed. He then sauntered out across the street and walked a good half-mile up a lane to the house of a retired solicitor in the neighborhood, with whom he had formed for some years past a half-patronizing acquaintance. Here he dined and had plenty to drink and some talk which was of service. Drink never caused Major Tom to become genial, and there lay ahead of him an interview at which he did not wish to be genial, although he did wish to have all his wits about him.

So he left his friend's house in no pleasant mood and took his way by appointment to Trampen Park, cursing the lodge-keeper for not opening the high iron gate for him as quickly as he expected.

Never had summer evening been more beautiful.

As he ascended the slope of the curved avenue, its double band of elms made a firm outline against a silver sky. A few mild stars shone overhead, soon to be quenched by the late moon, whose rising made a translucent patch behind the house. All the scent of flowering shrubs was abroad in the air; in the yew garden the statues of garlanded nymphs stood, as if just arrested in their joyous dance. But Kellynch, though a lover of these things in his way, saw no beauty tonight in the stateliness of his inheritance. His thoughts were not to be soothed by silver moon or carven nymphs. All the way, he pushed himself on, with urgent irritation.

So the girl was practically in possession after all. She reigned here, while he, the heir, had to put up at the inn and foot it to her door! (That it was his own choice not to take out his car made it no less of a grievance.) All he looked on,—park, mansion, trees, flowers, paddocks, made her home. What was left for him when his day came? Nothing! She would have the money, of course, she was to pick his bones, and his cupboard would be as bare as Mother Hubbard's. "The poor Lord Nothing," she had called him, had she? He recalled the curve of her lifted lip as she spoke the words and drew a deep, furious breath at the recollection.

Major Tom, however, was no fool and heeded the stir of the whiskey along his veins. After all, he held good cards and the game was yet to play. He must be wary and more discreet than he had been. At that dinner with Pendragon, he had talked too much, even Marrindon had heard of it. There must be such carelessness now. With this thought in mind, he turned deliberately and took a stroll around the garden

to finish his cigarette, nor did he approach the house until he had himself completely in hand.

Evidently he was expected. At once he was ushered into one of the smaller drawing rooms, which he remembered had been formerly used as boudoir for one of the past ladies of the house. Special efforts, (he noticed with resentment,) had been made to render it attractive. Flowers stood everywhere, some fine pieces of furniture (his furniture!) had been added to the original 18th century set, while a table near the hearth was crowded with bibelots and books. A portrait of Heriot in his childhood had been taken from the picture gallery and hung over the mantelpiece. The only photograph in the room was a faded cabinet of an ugly, spare, common-looking woman, with eye-glasses and projecting teeth. Major Kellynch stared at it curiously.

Nicole did not keep him waiting. Swift and light, she entered the room, head high, and the moment his gaze lit on her, his anger burned afresh. There was something about her half-exotic grace, her poise, her finish, that seemed to him insolent with victory. Grudgingly he must acknowledge that she had grown much more beautiful, and bore herself as if all her life she had played hostess in great houses, given directions to footmen, been clothed by important French dress-makers and worn ropes of pearls about her little neck. Oh how he hated her, the upstart, the outsider! And yet, so well he kept this hatred under cover that, to Nicole, as they shook hands, he seemed no more odious than usual. She was conventionally gracious as she waved him to a chair and sank into her own; and her manner had an assurance which in itself was an offense. A little pause fell, while Major Tom's

glance appraised the room, the back-ground, before it returned to the slender, delicately clad-figure before him.

"So," he slowly observed, "this is your little nest, isn't it? The nest you have feathered?"

Nick hesitated, a new seriousness in her eyes. She had made up her mind that the interview could not be a pleasant one, as well as to a certain degree of frankness toward Major Tom's attitude. This was inevitable; he couldn't understand anything else. But her thought still estimated him as a good-natured sort of man, coarse perhaps, but with a decent, appealable side. Of the depth and flavor of his vindictiveness she had no possible conception, so, though gravely, she nodded.

"If you choose to call it that. I don't."

"I dessay not," said Major Tom, "but other people will, y' know." He turned his head again. "Yes, You've done pretty well for yourself, I should say. Feeling pretty satisfied over your success, ain't you?"

"Not as you put it." She must try to explain; and she fixed her large eyes, dark with earnestness, upon her visitor. Leaning forward, she clasped her hands together, she was all tense with her effort for sincerity. "No, *not* as you think, Major Tom! I am glad my Father wants me with him, but that he *does* seems to have changed me. Perhaps its having a home. I'm sure you'll understand. I feel quite, quite differently about—Father—" she caught her breath at the word. "I'm not the same as when we talked together. It isn't what you think pleases me, but his being so good to me. The rest doesn't matter as it once did."

An incredulous smile on his face brought her to a stop, conscious of the uselessness of what she was saying.

"Well, well, well," he commented, with a meditative smoothness that carried a chill in the words. "Wonderful, how noble we are, once we get what we angled for! Often I've noticed it; but between you and me, m' dear, don't you think it's rather a waste of time?"

"It happens to be the truth," Nick answered, steadily. "You can think what you like. Since I've come to know him better, I'm ashamed of the way I spoke and thought about my father."

On the tip of his tongue came the suggestion that bastards were always held to be underhanded and capricious, but he thought better of it, having had some previous knowledge of her spirit. So he shifted his position and went on, in that level voice which was somehow a perfect medium for the violence that lay in his mind.

"Very forgiving, I'm sure. Never heard Uncle Ian wasn't fond of you. Y' know those charming stories that went all over town last spring, about you livin' with him and all,—they showed affection, didn't they? If you ask me, I'll say his acknowledgin' you came just in time, if it did come in time."

"When you speak like that," the girl replied and laid her hand on the bell, "There is nothing for me to do but show you out of Lord Heriot's house."

She looked, she spoke, with unmistakeable firmness; and Kellynch saw that he had gone too far.

"Oh well, I'm meanin' only the past," he hastily assured her, "I've always defended you."

"Have you? I'm not so sure," she said plainly, but she took her finger from the bell.

"Why, 'course I have, in my position, couldn't do anything else now, could I?" She looked, because she could not speak. She clasped the arms of her chair

and called upon all her courage. There fell a dreadful little silence. Then she heard him answer his own question.

"A man must stand up for his future wife, mustn't he?"

Again he waited, but Nick was dumb. He could hear her hurried breathing and smiled to himself in satisfaction.

"I don't want to be pressin', understand, or indiscreet," proceeded the Major, relaxing into his chair, and allowing a less artificial note to creep into his voice. Conscious of mastery, he took pains to maintain that quiet man-of-the-world attitude, by which he dominated the interview. "I realize its all new to you yet, and no doubt you've felt it would be tactless, so early in the game, to mention our arrangement to Uncle Ian. I rather fancy he'll be very pleased when he thinks it over, t'will fit in very well." He waited, then went on, "I'll stop in myself and give Marrindon a hint. He knows how to handle the old boy, you see."

As he talked on in that casual and deadly voice, Nick began to feel cold, cold—a chill creeping upwards all over her stiff body. She clasped her hands, she rubbed them together for warmth, yet the shiver overcame her, mounting to her very heart. Stone-cold she sat, and knew why it was.

"You told me yourself when to come," the voice went on, "you said, 'when I'm taken into his house and, called Miss Kellynch, 'when I'm taken into his house—and here you are!——'"

Still she said nothing and Major Kellynch appeared very much surprised. Through an icy mist, she saw him rise from his chair, stroll over the hearth-rug and stand, looking down.

"Surely a man has a right to know where he stands in such a matter? Particularly when all the overtures come from the other side? T'wasn't me that suggested it. T'was your own proposition, remember!" he ended; and Nicole remembered. With what shame and loathing she remembered that incredible self of six weeks ago, that Nick who knew no father, who knew no Denis, who knew nothing in fact of what it behooved her to know!

"I can't deny that I did say something of the kind—" she faltered.

"Something of the kind! My dear girl, you proposed in so many words that I should marry you—just as soon as you had enough money to make it worth my while to overlook—the other things. You can't deny it."

She recalled now that she had prepared certain words in certain speeches—she must try to use them—she must try——

"Maybe I can't Major Tom, but what would any decent man make of those words of mine? A miserable, lonely girl standing on the outside and looking in at life. Why, one is so unhappy, one snatches at anything!"

"Even me?" He raised his brows and for some reason, she drew encouragement from the question and her strained face melted and warmed. She looked at him with glowing eyes and lips tremulous and parted.

"You couldn't hold me to that—no man—no gentleman I mean, would. I was simply insane with jealousy and envy. I don't want to marry—anybody. As to Father, I simply didn't know him and didn't understand him. I've been dreadfully ashamed of myself ever since. If you'll forget it, Major Tom, and for-

give me, I'll use whatever influence I may have over Father to see that he does the right thing by you and the estate. I will indeed, I promise!"

This was almost more than his man-of-the-world calm could bear.

"Oh, you promise?" he drew a fierce breath, which broke into a half-laugh. "You promise—sitting there with his pearls around your neck! My dear, you're too good. And what belief have I in any promise of your's? I dessay you'd like to keep me the poor Lord Nothing, wasn't that your name for me?"

"If I did, I'm sorry. I beg you——"

"Wait a bit and let me have my say out. I've a right to it." He spoke more quietly, but still on that a note of easy mastery which increased her horrible sense of helplessness. "A contract's a contract. You came to me with this proposition. 'An offensive and defensive alliance,' was what you called it. I told you I'd think it over and I agreed to it. I made a sacrifice in one way, because my father and mother were married in Church, but half-a-million pounds is worth a few tales about one's wife. Anyway, I agreed. You were perfectly cool-headed regarding the whole affair. 'Tisn't my fault if you choose to get sentimental later on."

Incredible, that he should speak the truth as he did! Incredible and torturing. Where were the appeals and speeches she had thought to use? She groped for them. Meanwhile, her silence and the apparent effect his words had on her, began to disconcert Major Kellynch. He hadn't expected her to be like this. He had looked to find her arrogant, evasive and coquetish; he had prepared for resistance of a kind to heighten his pulses and the absence of it clouded his

triumph. If it was true he rather disliked melodrama, yet he did love to bully. So he went on.

"As I was saying, I'll have a word myself with Mar-rindon and after he gets used to it, I think you'll find Uncle Ian will like the idea very well. It settles so many problems. A reformed rake, you know—and he knows all about that."

She interrupted. "I shall tell my Father then, that I couldn't think of such a thing, not for an instant!"

"Quite so, my dear, quite. But can you? You forget what he knows perfectly well, namely, that no law can legitimize you and that your only chance of becoming Lady Heriot and St. Helier's is to tie up to your humble servant. Some men in my place might choke a bit, you know—over Broadway and all that."

She had plenty of spirit now. She sprang up to face him, white under the insult and again laid her hand on the bell.

"Needn't get excited—" he told her unruffled, "Haven't I said I'd overlook everything? You're rather handsome, you know. Oh, you needn't ring, I'm goin' anyhow."

He paused until Nick had dropped her hand from the little button, he knew she would have to hear what he had to say. And he leaned comfortably back in his chair while he said it and looked up at the young, slender woman before him, with a real appearance of enjoyment.

"I'm not going to be pressin', there's no need. Let's see: Uncle Ian's birthday shoot comes the end of September. He's bound to ask me to Whins for that. He always has. I'll put it to him then, and we'll announce the engagement." He smiled under his moustache with genuine gratification.

"You won't do it," she burst out, wildly—"you can't! No man could, I've helped you a lot in the past, haven't I? I've done my best to get you money, haven't I? And I will in future, oh, I will. You don't want to marry me if I can get you the money, do you?"

"I don't know," he said. The sudden glow of intensity in Nick's face and eyes, the appealing grace of her figure, its new, strange softness,—Major Tom found these affecting him, but in quite another way from what she hoped. Up to that moment in their acquaintance, she had left him cold, now she stirred his thin pulses. He sat, deadly still, looking and looking, and for the first time, lust tinged the hatred he felt for her.

"After all, I'd rather go to my Father and explain everything."

"Explain!" he laughed abruptly, "Won't you be findin' that a bit hard? Too many things to explain, m' dear! You forget your letters, I've several and if I recall they're not so devoted to the old boy as you feel nowadays, it seems. They ain't exactly affectionate. Then, wasn't there a will, Marrindon sent? He'll have a record of the day 'twas mailed, and 'twasn't handed over when it came, I remember. You'll have difficulty in explaining some of these little matters, I fancy." He drew a long breath—"You see, I've got you where I want you, Miss Nobody," he said in a sudden, uncontrolled exultation. She saw the tip of his tongue run along his upper lip and his face shone with cruelty.

CHAPTER XXVII

"Come home, home to my heart, thou banished peace!"

FAR AWAY within the house came that final sound of a closing door. Nick heard it where she sat in her chair, turning and re-turning the page of the Spectator. Had she picked the paper up and crumpled it between her cramped fingers as a weapon or as a shield? She did not know, so possessed was she by her humiliated misery. Time passed. The small distinct note of a clock struck the hour. By this bell the girl was suddenly released. She became intent, sprang to her feet, snatched up a white, fringed shawl which lay on a chair and threw it over her. At the door of the room she paused to listen. No sound.

Nick crossed the broad hall and entered a small library on the further side of it, her father's room. Tall book-cases rose above her in the dusk and as she hurried past, his big, empty chair standing under the lamp seemed to glance at her as chairs do, with an air of reproachful enquiry. The drawing-room beyond blazed with light. Six long windows made six golden oblongs on the terrace without. Moonlight cut the yew hedges into definite silhouettes. Unlocking the window, Nick let herself out, carefully shutting it behind her. She crossed the terrace and her feet sank noiselessly into turf. What dim light there was

touched, as with a delicate veil, the thick surface of the dewy grass and the night breathed all around her. She hurried, she ran down the slope, her steps all too slow for her troubled spirit. Suppose she were too late? Suppose Denis had gone?

The terrace looks out upon the lawn in its gradual descent, open toward a vista of fine oaks and strips of copse and woodland. Half-way down this slope and well under the shadow of the trees, stands a marble bench and toward this bench she hastened. Was Denis still there? Did his eyes watch the coming of that figure, all touched with moonlight, whose heart beat in rhythm with its flying feet? Yes. As she drew near, the shadows gave up his figure; he stood watching, waiting, he was there, Denis was there.

He had seen the slim, crystal shape hurrying, hurrying toward him and was suffocated with joy. But when she slipped her cold hands into his, which would not let them go, his joy turned swiftly to concern for what he read in her face. It was a mask of fear and anguish and she breathed out "Oh Denis!" as if she had never called him anything else.

"Oh Denis!" she breathed and drew him swiftly into the shadow. He would have led her to the bench, but she gave a moan, slid from his reverent and pitying grasp to the ground beside him, and laid her tormented forehead against his knee.

"Oh Denis, I've been such a beast! . . . I've been such a beast, Denis! Why have I always thought the worst of people, why did I keep my own grievances so raw? I thought the worst of *you*—on the island years ago, and you were only a boy. I thought evil of my father—oh, I did—and he's only a boy too. Since I came to London, I feel as if I've been slowly

going insane from envy and jealousy and wickedness—and wickedness!”

“Oh no, Nick, no!”

“Yes, yes, you don’t realize, you don’t dream all I imagined and all I’ve done. Let me stay here please. Denis, I hated you because he loved you—it was sheer, mad jealousy. I wanted to be first with him. Then, ever since I came to London I’ve plotted, schemed—I was so angry and hard that ever so long ago, I determined to make use of that horrible man.”

“What horrible man?”

“Major Tom” she moaned, “to get what I wanted—what my father had denied me. And I was his *secretary*, Denis, he *trusted* me!”

The despair in her voice! He could do nothing but wait, steadying her, his arm over the shaking shoulders. He did not speak, it seemed best to wait till she had poured out all that bitter flood. Was this the way Love came to one? Denis wondered.

“You see, I was so alone,” the voice went on, “everyone, everywhere, took for granted I must be underhanded and that I couldn’t be decent. I was shut out. I hated my life and I hadn’t anybody. Till you came it never dawned on me to be generous. My only chance seemed to be that I found my will was stronger than his, I had a certain influence over him—I determined to make use of it and so fight my way step by step into the Inner Ward where I belonged. Denis, do you blame me so terribly?”

“No, I blame him.”

“But,” she cried, “you love him too?”

And Denis could only answer roughly. “But how is one to help it?”

Where they sat the shadows enfolded them, yet

they looked out upon light, silver and unrevealing. No leaf moved, no cloud stained the sky and the hills beyond, flattened and dim, made dusky gray curves on the horizon. As Nick crouched there, clinging to his hand, all realities began to slip away from Denis: night, nearness and love alone remained. His love was immensely more pitying than he had dreamed; it went to the very depths of his nature and was consecrated there because of her trust in him. This strange pair, Heriot and his daughter, belonged somehow to him by right of understanding, by right of love. Now the young voice began again—and irresistibly another picture rose before him—the terrace with its long windows shining—while Heriot's troubled and passionate speech (how like, how like her's!) poured itself out, thrilling with all its tragic memories!

"That's it. One loves him, and now that I too love him as you do, I see that if he did wrong—God knows—I have done far, far worse. For I have betrayed him knowingly, while *he*—he has only betrayed me ignorantly. Oh, its all such a puzzle; how far back one ought to count life. But you are in the midst of it, Denis. Oh Denis, let me hold your hand and it will give me courage. When one repays wrong with wrong it hits back so. Perhaps if I'd only kept on hating him, but then, I couldn't. The very things I used to criticize are just the things now I seem to care for—I mean his simplicity and gayety, his impulsive shortsightedness, his imagination, his way of wiping out and beginning. Why, he's forgotten already about my childhood—how I came to London—all the horrors. It's just—I am Nick and he is fond of me. I marvel at him sometimes. I, who saw life so harsh and hideous, have learned from him to smile at it as picturesque

and kind. From him, Denis—and from you, oh *more*, Denis, from you. After all, how can I blame my father? He has never in his life seen things as they really are—he doesn't now!"

Supreme criticism of the Victorian.

She paused exhausted, drooping, and covered her face. The moments were slipping on. Her hand lay in his, palm warm to palm and if he paused an instant to realize it, Denis knew he was lost. There was danger and they must meet it—his mind clung to that fact.

"I must know all, Nick. I must know it exactly, else I cannot help, my dear. You say this man has letters—what sort of letters?"

"Three or four, oh, not love-letters! I never even flirted with him and he knows it. But—there are things I said about Father which will hurt him terribly."

"I'm not sure," said Denis grimly, "that one oughtn't to hurt your father, if only to let him see how you felt."

"No, no. I understand him now. He's forgotten all that—he's looking forward. And those letters are—horribly disloyal. He could never believe in me again. He'd see me just as I was, the ugly thing I was, the out-sider trying to creep in."

"But whose fault is it, after all, that you are an out-sider?"

"Perhaps not wholly father's" she replied confusedly and rose from her crouched position to sit beside him, "Anyway, it's all so complicated—that part—that I've given up trying to work it out. It's easier to think about him and me just as people. We're alike in many ways, and I've found out that we need each other.

God knows if he treated me badly as a parent," she broke out in a sob, "I've been a rotten secretary to him, my dear."

"What can this Kellynch man *do* except talk?"

Nick shivered. "You know Father—he might get the idea I ought to marry him."

"But you never would?"

For the first time, she turned her eyes on him and they were dark and desperate, "Not," she answered, drawing breath between each word, "unless—you told—me—I ought——?"

"Oh my dear," Denis said, "my dear!" Like a swimmer in a strong tide he gave himself to the gathering flood. No need to tell her that she was passionately loved; her face all strained and wild answered his silence.

What folly to speak at all, he or she, who were lovers, on such a night as this! She said, "Denis, Denis!" once or twice, before she gave herself to his arms, to his lips. Under his hand, he felt her heart leap in one great bound—then stop—and then hurry on again, as if in a sudden tumult of joy.

BOOK III

CHAPTER XXVIII

ALL evening the motors had been passing him on the road in a continuous procession. Heavy, big cars most of them, stately limousines too wide for the narrow track, and forcing the pedestrian constantly to step aside against wall or hedge to receive the casual glance of their elderly occupants. This glance held no curiosity, but the pedestrian was not without it and stared a little at the handsome, well-wrapped people, the sort of people, only less vivacious, that he associated at home with going to the Opera.

Only here was not Broad Street or Fifth Avenue with brilliant lights and raucous voices, here was a land as empty and wild and silent as the Silverwater Valley, a land of mist, falling dusk, grey hills and a bird calling now and then, somewhere very far off. Thus the motors had a curious ghostly effect, had they not been so well accounted for by the Station-master, at the small, bare place where Denis left the train—an account enlarged on, moreover, by way of excusing his own failure to provide the stranger with any sort of conveyance.

"Usually," he assured the American, "they were better served at the Glegside—but this was none other than the Great Day—the Laird's Birthday, no less—ye'll have been hearing of Lord Heriot—na doot? It is to and fro the big doings at Whins that all the folk will be going the night."

The stranger seemed disappointed and weary, yet pleasant-spoken enough. He paid no heed to the suggestion of waiting on an hour or so—till one of the hired cars might return. On the contrary, he shook his head, shouldered his bag and asked how far it was to Whins?

The station-master said it was a goodish bit, like his kind, he was not accustomed to terms more exact, but a certain picturesqueness of phrase supplied their place.

"Ye'll tak' the road," he said, "aiven doon till ye come to the brig. Ye'll fare on aways on the high moors and happen ye'll see the Auld Hoose shinin' afore ye on the hill-side."

It sounded easy and adventurous and there was nothing for Denis to do but to set forth on foot. He had his own special reasons for wishing to arrive as speedily as possible, to arrive, in fact, before he was expected; so, with thanks uttered in unfamiliar accents, he turned away, crossed the patch of light made by the lamps upon the line, and was swallowed by the darkness as though he had never been. He left the other in some perplexity as to who he was and what might be his business at the castle. A stranger from overseas, by the tongue of him—to be taken cautiously as gentry—but surely not to be classed along with the caterers and piano-tuners? Yet how could he be a guest at Whins? . . . the station-master asked himself as he locked his little box for the night. Hadn't Miss Kellynch herself been down on her chestnut mare, with a list of those expected by train, to be provided with conveyances by the village?

Certainly, Denis didn't feel like a guest. Suit-case in hand, he turned from the oasis of light, to plunge

into that dark unknown toward the heart of which his way led. The road was good, but narrow, and appeared to rise steadily in ascending curves. For a long time he was diverted and his way brightened by the stream of motors advancing with lights set low, like dragon-eyes. But as they grew fewer, his way began to grow darker, and the country around grew barer and mistier and emptier. Ruinous stone walls confined the track on either hand; below them sounded the running gurgle of a brook. There seemed so few trees; he could only make out vague, rounded hills, one behind another. The sky was covered; a damp, persistent, chilly little wind blew against his face, bringing with it unfamiliar whiffs, suggesting sheep, a boggy, earthy smell of mountain-pools and the sharpish scent he suspected to be heather. Denis had all the associations with Scotland that may be gathered by a reader of books; somehow in this first incursion, she seemed strangely to fulfil herself. Somewhere, beyond the darkness and the mist, surely kilts were swinging through the heather, the Fiery Cross was borne from cottage to cottage and Waverley or David Balfour was hurrying to the refuge of the Macgregor or the cave of Cluny MacPherson.

He shifted his heavy bag and hastened on. What would he find at Whins—a welcome? He could not deny that Lord Heriot had been far from pleased at his leaving so suddenly, six weeks ago. To Heriot's thinking, the cable to recall Denis was merely an exhibition of ill-judging paternal tyranny. There were hundreds of young American lawyers—so Heriot supposed—who were entirely fitted to live in offices and of no use whatever anywhere else. Why therefore disturb the one among these hordes whom he hap-

pened to like? Being unused to have anyone deprive him of any society he chanced to wish, and with memories, moreover, of a youth spent in disregarding the claims of elders and offices, Heriot had rather supposed that Denis would revolt. Denis hadn't revolted; he hadn't shown his friend the cable summons. Denis had seemed preoccupied and anxious; he had taken himself off abruptly and in a great bustle; and Lord Heriot had been disappointed and had gone down to see his daughter at Trampen Park, feeling vexed with Denis for being fundamentally, after all, so very American! To rush about at such short notice at the call of a cable was unquestionably very American, just as Heriot had begun to feel that the lad was learning other ways. Well, well, one couldn't change them it seems—quite so! He told Nicole and she agreed that one couldn't change them. She added, after a pause, that Mr. Traquair had promised to return for the birthday party, while her father had raised his curved brows and remarked in his Lord-in-waiting voice that they would see about that.

Denis, of course, had never heard that conversation, but he was perceptive and he pretty well guessed what had taken place. His thoughts left Heriot for the moment to review that time just spent at home. It was a crowded time indeed. As he looked back now, it seemed a time also of curious confusion and unrest—with an underlying sense of impermanency about it—the last feeling he had ever expected to have about his home. He had lived in a shadow of preoccupation, with heart and thoughts perpetually pulled toward the other side of the ocean—if there had been any moments left over for chilly fears, beyond the burning zeal of the task in hand. His face had been pale and

furrowed; his eyes inward. In truth, as his sisters sorrowfully confided to one another—this was not Denis at all.

This was not Denis, but a man divided from himself, by some brutal barrier which he could not surmount—nor could his relations at all account for so profound a change, by the glib assumption that his head had been turned from contact with the aristocracy of Great Britain. Such an experience as these last weeks should have refreshed and stimulated their Denis—whereas this Denis seemed merely depressed.

"No; I don't understand it, mamma," Mr. James Traquair confided to his wife that first evening, "even what Edith wrote about his being sick doesn't explain it to my mind. Yes, he did what I gave him to do, but that was a month ago and it's over three weeks since we got Graham's signature for the new motor-road. Why didn't he come home? He knows I take my vacation in July. When I asked him, he said he was too busy and he looked . . . well, I never saw the boy look like that."

"You've forgotten, Jim," said Mary Traquair quietly, from her chair in the sunset corner of the upper piazza.

"Forgotten what?"

"The way you looked when Dad said we couldn't be married till you were sure of fifteen hundred a year."

"You think Denis is in love with this *notorious* young person?" her husband exploded.

"The first thing he did was to ask for his letters—and he's collected his own mail at the village, every single day. Lord Heriot wrote him, Denis showed me the letter and it was perfectly charming—but I don't think he has written again. Yet his mail is fearfully

on the child's mind." She spoke reflectively and her husband listened, but he smiled at her in triumph, being for once entirely sure of his ground.

"You're wrong, dear! I've seen a handful of Denis's mail and do you know what it is? Letters from *detectives* and a long thick one from old Chittenden, who used to manage the Vincey estate. I had a run in with him once on that Manhattan and Hudson litigation and I rather liked the old man. He's retired now—lives at Pleasantville—what's *he* writing Denis about? I know his letters well. Now what I'm afraid of, mamma, is that there's something wrong and this Heriot man has roped Denis into it, that's what I'm afraid of."

"Well you may do anything you like except ask him," Mrs. Traquair quietly remarked, as she rose from her chair.

Her husband reflected, from where he still sat watching the last yellow band of sunset fade out over the hills, on the curious instinct of a mother of the species—that instinct which causes protection to be the natural maternal attitude no matter what the circumstances. His own feeling was that he wanted to have it out with Denis at once; but in the thirty-five years of married life he had never gone contrary to Mary's judgment where any one of the children was in question. Her nature was fitted, he knew, with a sensitive, subconscious apparatus for receiving messages from them, messages to which he himself, conscientious and affectionate parent though he was, had never been attuned; and he inferred that she had thus received certain vibrations from whatever mystery was hidden in the breast of his younger son.

Mrs. Traquair's patience was rewarded before many

days. Denis, as he tramped the Scottish road, still felt his heart warmed and comforted in the glow of that hour, when he had taken his parents into his confidence. He recalled the very scene—an August night of storm and torrential rain, when the voice of the Silverwater rose from the gorge below in an angry crashing, when the oaks at the edge of the lawn roared in the gale and every window shook to the pounding of the rain. He spoke then because the moment had come when he absolutely had to speak, for the sufficient reason that he had neither money nor time to pursue his ends and that he must have their help. The story he had to tell sounded in his own tired ears as undesirable, impossible even, as he drew from his mother's controlled pallor and folded hands, as well as from his father's legally set mouth—a keen perception how it must sound to them. The waif he had pulled out of the water, she who stood in the eyes of all London, (including those of his father's friend Mr. Waghorn), as an unscrupulous and triumphant adventuress of base birth and baser instincts, now being blackmailed by one of her own kind; her father, hardly one of whose acts in youth could bear the scrutiny of his own hard-working, high-principled father—yet whom he defended with a sympathetic tenderness that caused his mother to stare at him—how could these two be understood, be seen as they were? Human beings were too often traduced by their very acts! He tried to end up with something to this effect and broke down over it.

James Traquair felt the effort in his son's halting exposition—luckily for Denis, he felt the misery as well. "Anyway," he said to himself, "he's not pretending its a pretty story—nor congenial; we'll go

slow here a bit, I think." Aloud, he said: "You see, my boy, your mother and I do not know anything much about that world. We've read of it, of course, but when I've been to England, the men I met with Waghorn were members of the Bar like ourselves. What their private lives were, I never asked, certainly they always seemed the height of respectability. Old Decimus' business," Mr. Traquair added reflectively, "was to keep his clients respectable. Nor have I had much experience in my own practice, of the situation of base-born children. I recall one or two," his eyes grew reminiscent "there was that son of General Whittaker, the banker. He settled something on the boy and sent him to Oklahoma—where he did well. And there was a woman with a baby, of whom one of the Smiths had to get rid before Julie Winterden and he got married—you remember, mamma? One or two, of course—every office comes across them—but not complicated, as in this case, with big money and position. I say, here and now, it isn't what I like."

"Do you mind, Denis, if your father and I ask just a few questions?" Mrs. Traquair's quiet steady voice came in and her son turned a wild eye on her and said, of course he didn't mind.

"Well then, are you engaged to this young lady?"

"No."

A look from his wife caused Mr. Traquair's next question to change its form.

"You were close to both father and daughter all along, I understand. Was it your influence then, that brought them together?"

"She says so, but I don't believe it. Heriot wanted her all the time—only 'it wasn't done' as they say and he didn't realize it."

"He's fond of her?"

"He's devoted to her."

"Yet he allowed the most dreadful things to be said!" This came from Denis's mother and when he was silent, she looked at him over her crocheting.

"Why don't you sit down, Denny? You make me *so* nervous, fidgeting about like that? You were saying, dear?" She addressed her husband and he correctly interpreted her remark as meaning that it was his turn to catechize. He settled himself in his chair, crossed his long legs and began to trot one foot. His eyes as they surveyed his son, were considering and impersonal. "Lord Heriot evidently liked you. Why didn't you ask him for his daughter? Knowing you, I don't suppose it was because you aren't yet in any position to marry?"

"I don't know. There's this present danger and then he'd only just acknowledged her. I think he had other ideas." The hesitations in this speech offended the listener's pride.

"You're not telling me that this gentleman would regard you—an American—a *Philadelphian*—and a member of the Bar in high standing, as not good enough for his natural daughter?"

Badgered Denis winced and tried to answer, "As you put it, father, no! But she, Nick, thinks that in time he'll want her to marry the heir, because only in that way can she become Lady Heriot. That's the vital thing to his mind."

"And the heir is this Kellynch fellow? a man of evil life and the one who's causing all the trouble?" Mrs. Traquair's gaze was veiled in amazement.

"It's no use, Mamma," her husband said, in that aloof and ironical tone which Denis had thought reserved

for use in Court, "this whole affair is beyond us. These people don't see life and so on as we do, it seems. Denis understands them. I recollect very well," he pursued reminiscently, "the scandal about Lord Heriot in 1898. Yes I recall it, although its true I didn't connect it with his name before you sailed last spring. It made a great noise. I had my first arguments before the Supreme Court that fall and the Spanish War was just ending—I had to be a lot in Washington. Everybody was furious over it. He didn't even insult us privately; he simply flaunted the woman. And you tell us that he's now tardily enough acknowledged his own child, after permitting every sort of ugly story to be told about her by employing her as his secretary! That's the man whose feelings you want us to help you to spare? I ask you!"

This speech roused Denis to realize that he had committed a gross error; he had allowed his emotions and not his head, to run his case. As an advocate he could hardly have done worse. To have this beloved pair sitting in judgment on that other beloved pair—he simply couldn't endure it. From the hearth-rug, where he stood between them, he addressed his father with something of the spirit and the persuasiveness of the old Denis that they knew best.

"Well sir; I remember once your saying to me that you never could decide whether a man should be judged by his best or his worst actions. I can't defend Lord Heriot in that matter of 1898. He was spoiled I guess and careless. When it comes to Nick, you mustn't forget the attitude of his world isn't the same as our's. I don't think he really heard the worst that was said and he ignored the rest. He wanted her near, oh, of course he was selfish. But if you only knew

him, sir, you'd forget all that. He's wonderful, he's sixty-nine with the color of thirty. And his kindness to me—and his generosity—his work during the War! Everybody who knows Heriot loves him. You can't help it. Mother'd adore him. He's like a brilliant child in some ways. He treated me like a son, and by George, I don't seem to care if he had the harem of a Sultan of Turkey!"

"Oh," remarked Mr. Traquair and his wife glanced at him, not quite sure what the monosyllable meant.

"It all comes down to this," Denis rushed on at full speed. "I got into the affair by no fault of my own, but I am in and nothing can change it. Whether Nick and I can ever marry really doesn't alter things. I'm bound, as I see it, to protect her and Heriot. On account of the title, he may fall in with that damned scoundrel's plots. All right. Now years ago the beast got into some mess here—some real trouble—and I must ferret it out and hold it over him. Its the only way. But that takes time and my time, sir, belongs to you. Some weeks, I should say and then the going back. Also, of course, it takes money—not a great deal, but as you know I haven't *any*. Yet I must do it. That's all, sir."

The pause which followed this quixotic speech was prolonged and Mary Traquair tried not to look at her unmoved husband and her white-faced son. She bent over her needle, sorry for both of them, for the one who had to give pain and the one who had to receive it. It was very hard but it had to be and Denis was young—he'd get over it after a while. (She knew Denis and she didn't say *soon*.) Mr. Traquair had put his head meditatively back, slowly trotted his foot and appeared attentive only to the noise made by the storm

against the windows. That rain was really terrible, there wouldn't be a flower left in the garden. Yes, she was sorry for Denis although not a little shocked by him. Now James was beginning to pass sentence and she would have to back him up. Oh it was dreadful and she knew James too well to hope it would be other than final; though of course it was all for Denis's good.

"You know how I totally disapprove," said the cold voice she expected, "of mixing yourself in anyone's family affairs—let alone tagging after disreputable aristocrats" (oh *poor* Denis—surely his father might be gentler!) "but if a couple of months or more will settle your mind—I don't suppose it matters. As regards the money——"

Mary Traquair, in stupefaction, heard her own voice fill in the pause, as if it were the voice of a stranger.

"There are Aunt Ellen's bonds you know, Jim, that she left me last year. Denis can have what he needs from them. I want him to understand," she concluded, severely regarding her husband and speaking with great firmness, "that I think intimacy with these people undesirable for him—and I don't expect him, after all this, to remain in their set!"

The most suggestive interchange of this conversation was one Denis never heard. It passed after he had wrung his father's hand muttering something, evading his mother's eyes, though he kissed her. Then he suggested—in such a ringing voice, that he'd better have a look at the garage roof before he turned in. They heard him rummage in the hall closet for his mackintosh and then the garden door banged after him in the wind.

Mr. and Mrs. Traquair had not looked at one an-

other; there lay between them an atmosphere of surprise. Then Mrs. Traquair slowly rolled up her filet and stabbed it with a needle.

"Jim—did you intend from the very beginning to do what you did—I mean, to let Denis go and give him the money?"

He looked at her over his cigar with a smile.

"Why no, Mary," he said, "of course I didn't—did you?"

CHAPTER XXIX

SURELY he must be drawing near to Whins? Those pleasant pictures of home with which he had been beguiling his lonely walk, dropped away from his thoughts and others arose in their place. Would Nick be at the end of this tedious journey—the Nick he knew and loved? Would he be in time? That collision with a barge just as they were steaming into Glasgow had been very unfortunate for his plans, delaying him more than twenty-four hours. And what position meanwhile had Tom Kellynch been able to build for himself? Rumors had reached the American that his sudden departure for the States had not been unnoticed and if noticed, Denis knew, its significance would not fail to be understood. He was at the moment, quite alone and unsupported, in the Kellynch country, where he and Nick were outsiders together. What could he hope to accomplish? His father had pointed this out to him in all its hopelessness, while one of the private detectives he had employed warned him to be careful. Careful, indeed!

But surely he must be drawing near? During the last half-hour his road had mounted again, curving around the shoulder of a sizeable hill and now he began to get the air from over the crest of it, wet and keen against his face. A turn there, on a sudden, the Great House lay before him across the valley, all its windows,

and lighted, like a ship lying at anchor in the dark harbor of the hills. The young man paused to gaze.

The building stood slightly above his present level, about half-a-mile away, on the hillside, which sloped gently before it and rose protectively above its roof. Of details, he could see nothing, but the lines of light revealed no mansion like Trampen Park, nothing so gracious, homely and familiar as that Georgian house. Yonder was a complex pile, unimaginably grim and feudal, composed of more than one block of buildings. To the right, rose a tall, narrow house with conical towers at the ends, guarded by a huge keep, of a shape quite new to him, for it sprang high like a giant tree upon a single trunk. The whole, though impressive, was exotic, removed from his experience, beheld like an erection in a dream or a stage-setting, something out of touch with reality. And Nick was there! Denis gazed and gazed; he had never felt more alone. . . .

From this point, the road began to descend sharply. As he started down, the glitter of the lighted house vanished, the night once more enshrouded him. Until this moment, he had noticed few other habitations, once or twice a cottage candle had glimmered over the moors, but for so ancient a land the emptiness was appalling. Probably the day-light would reveal those evidences of human life which darkness hid; and Denis could imagine the bare and homely cottage kitchens behind those sparks of light, where the evening chapter was being read and the prayers repeated. A quiet, decent countryside no doubt—yet hadn't there been wild tales enough about the Kellynch country? Raids, and brawling, murder and midnight assault? Well, he was glad that this 18th century adventure of his was taking place in the 20th century!

Then he saw, some yards below, another light, standing this time on a post close to the road, to mark where that road crossed the Gleg by means of a stone bridge. It revealed something else as well, namely, a man who lounged upon the bridge with his elbows on the parapet.

The fellow looked inoffensive enough nor did it occur to Denis to pause. He came straight on across the bridge—the man still turned his head away. But just as Denis reached the other side some instinct gave him warning—he looked back—the other was coming on with loaded cudgel upraised. Denis was always quick. He did the only possible thing, he threw himself flat on the ground as the blow struck over his head—another instant and he had got his assailant by the knees and grappled with him. They rolled in the road together, but the forces were unequal. The attacker, although heavier than the American, was no match for him in quickness and resource, moreover his heart was not in his work, he had bargained for an easy job. He was sorry he had ever undertaken it when Denis kneeled on his chest and squeezed his windpipe until he was purple in the face.

Since the dawn of time, there has been nothing so reviving to a discouraged lover as a violent physical encounter of this sort. The relief is psychological; all the pent-up emotion finds a sudden employment in action and no doubt that is why the lover always comes out ahead. Denis, kneeling and panting on the man's chest, felt enormously refreshed, equal to anything. Holding the creature's throat with one hand, he groped in the ditch till his fingers encountered a satisfying heap of spongy, wet clods. With sensations of active pleasure, he rammed a fistful into the fellow's gasping mouth, then made an effort and heaved him over the

barrier of low pebbles that bordered the stream. There was a splash as the body hit the Gleg—but Denis judged that the water could hardly be a fatal depth. Not that he cared! He only wished it had been Tom Kellynch himself.

He picked up his bag and addressed himself to his way. However, after he had walked on a few yards, it did strike Denis that he was foolish to continue along the highway. The man could not, perhaps, scramble up the banks of the Gleg in time to make after him—but who knows if he had an accomplice? Nor what ambuscades might lie in wait further on? He considered; Whins could not be very distant; the lights had last been seen a little to the left and on a rise. He would take his chance. Quitting the highway, he climbed the stone wall and struck out vaguely across the moor.

For awhile it was open going, then the ground grew rougher and he began to regret he had taken this way. More than once he felt the bog squelching under his foot, boulders were encountered, he stepped in and out of hollows, he skirted the margin of a group of trees. What encouraged him was the gradual clearing of the mists from the sky, so that a faint star-light assisted him, and guided by this, he came after a time to a stout fence, which must he knew, enclose the limits of a park. Had Denis known anything at all about the extent of Scottish estates, the fence would hardly have brought him the comfort that it did, but to his American view a fence implied a house nearby and he rejoiced thereat. To climb it was not easy, yet he managed to get over and immediately lost himself in a plantation of young larches, where he wandered for fifteen minutes sweating with impatience and despair.

The damp, persistent wind blowing in his face helped him out of it. There shone the house once more, larger, nearer, but, alas, with many windows darkened, as though the festivities were over. Denis hurried, hurried, he jumped a burn, crossed a paddock and rejoiced to feel under his feet the clipped turf of a lawn. Then he was confronted inexorably by the barrier of a high and impenetrable hedge and he edged wearily along it, deeply conscious that he was muddy, dishevelled, unpresentable, that nothing could have begun worse than this expedition, that failure faced him. In his mind arose a clear picture of his father's kind but cynical smile, "What did you expect, my dear boy—? To arrive like young Lochinvar out of the west and have all these people change their family arrangements to suit *you?*"

Why not turn back then and make for the inn, if there was one, and let Tom Kellynch say his say? No, he couldn't. He hated to go on looking like an adventurer—he hated to be sneaking into his friend's house like this under cover of night, yet he must—he *must* see Nick.

.. Suddenly, startingly, from the other side of the hedge, a voice spoke. It sounded just at his ear; Denis needed to exert all his self-control and freeze at once into stillness. The voice asked a question:

"But how do you know that you'll have the cash tomorrow? You expected it yesterday."

The speaker was unknown to Denis—his voice was entirely strange—yet by its flattened accent suggested that of a Londoner. He held his breath to hear the reply.

"How do I know? Because I mean to stand this no longer. I'm fed up. How would you or any man

stand it? To see this creature queening it over the countryside, covered with diamonds and Uncle Ian gloating over her!" The speaker swore deeply. "How'd you like it yourself? To be needing a beggarly thousand or two—you, the heir and to see him spend it on his bastard! Why, there ought to be a Commission—he's utterly gaga—!" Major Kellynch once more invoked the Almighty over his wrongs, while the pair began to move away along the path, on the further side of the hedge.

"But what can you do?" the unknown companion rejoined, in unmoved accents. "I don't understand."

"Give me twenty-four hours, my dear chap, and you will. I've a card or two. By this time tomorrow if I've not a cheque in my pocket to settle with you and the others—well, my name's not Kellynch. There are some things Uncle Ian won't stand. She thinks I want to marry her, I've let them both think it. Marry her, indeed! If he wants me, he must buy me! Wait a bit; maybe you'll hear Miss Nobody has been shipped to China or to Coventry, in search of her lost character. When Uncle Ian hears what I have to tell him mark my words"

The speaker's voice trailed into a mumble and the other mumbled a reply as the two men walked on. Major Kellynch could be heard urging the latter to patience. Feet rustled among the dry leaves and then that rustling ceased. Denis stood, hardly breathing; his heart pounded out the question, "Am I in time?"

When he judged it safe, he followed on, skirting the hedge and came out upon the kitchen garden. Before him rose the rearward parts of the castle building, which had an oddly cramped and irregular look. All was dark and quiet. The American paused, repeating

to himself directions given in a letter he had committed to memory and then, turning to the right, he entered an open paved court. At one side of it in a recess there was a discreet, small door, with a window beside it and this window to his relief, was still lighted. He knocked.

Now that he had actually arrived, Denis felt almost sick with tension, excitement and fatigue. He had to lean against the door jamb. For a long time nothing stirred. He was about to repeat his knock, when he became aware that through a black, opening crack, an old woman was staring at him.

“Mr. Traquair?”

Her voice was harsh, her face sour, she emanated disapproval. But she admitted him and when she next spoke her accent was fairly civil.

“You’re very late sir, maybe I’ll not be getting Miss Kellynch now. His Lordship is still in the reception hall with his guests. I’ll see. Will you follow, if you please?”

A vaulted, stone-flagged passage stretched dimly before them. They traversed it and then climbed a narrow, twisting stair. At its landing his guide opened a door and stood aside to let Denis pass. In an instant, he found himself standing in shadow but looking upon light; alone, but gazing on many people. A rush of warm, perfumed air reached him, the hum of many voices, laughter, music. . . .

His eyry was an ancient, carved gallery which occupied one end of a great, feudal hall. Spacious this was, and proportioned with dignity, old beams upheld it and supported as well a collection of stag’s heads and antlers, from which drooped festival banners and garlands. Patches of scarlet, blue and gold, crossed with loops

and lines of green, broke the sweep of the roof, while the wide space below blazed with light. Groups of people sat or stood about, appearing to Denis as on a stage. Either end of the hall was marked by an enormous hooded fire-place, in one of which logs were burning all enveloped in pointed flames, and on the hearth-rug—to which Denis's gaze flew eagerly and rested—there was Heriot standing in the full, theatrical effectiveness of his Highland dress. All his life, Denis was to remember that picture, it held for him the touch of an ideal and unforgettable romance. No great actor could have borne himself more proudly than Heriot, in his height and beauty, bore the rich, dark chequerings of the tartan, with all its accessories, the furred sporran, the gold-mounted dirks which his ancestor had received from the hand of Mary, Queen of Scots. In his left hand he held the eagle-feathered bonnet, for he had just stepped in from the terrace and he bent to the group around him with a smile the watcher knew so well. Almost one could catch the blue sparkle of his glance. There he stood, welcoming, Olympian, gracious, St. Helios indeed.

But where was that other—that other?

“This way sir, if you please!”

A touch on the arm roused Denis as he looked and looked at his friend. He must obey. His guide hurried him along the gallery, ushered him through a door, closed it after him. Once more he was quite alone. This little room must by its shape, occupy one of the towers which he had seen at either end of the house. The round walls were pierced by small, pointed windows and hung with green-grey tapestries. Over the fire-place hung the portrait of a girl in a scarlet hunting-coat, whose challenging black eyes met his with all the

animation one sees in certain 18th century countenances—a feverish liveliness. He wondered who she was. A few stiff, stately chairs and sofas stood about and Denis wandered among them a little forlornly. Steps at last—swift steps hurrying down the corridor. Nick stood in the room.

Denis drew back a pace; the blood left his heart, for he had never seen her like that. Her shoulders rose from a cloud of satin and silver, round pearls lay against her throat and were looped across her bosom. Her coils of black hair were strangely filleted with bands of diamonds, while tassels and festoons of diamonds somehow dangled from them, glittering with white fire when she turned her head. She was more unreal, more beautiful than any dream—she was removed from him—she was far away. What a fool—said his heart—what a fool you have been!

“Denis!” she cried and stood quivering.

When he was able to look at her—the small, square pale face with scarlet lips that he so loved had clouded and was sombre.

“But Denis—why do you look like that?”

Then she swept nearer and slipped her hands into his. At her touch he was broken to pieces.

He clung to her as though he would never let her go and their problems, their situation, these past weeks, his errand, this long journey—were all things of no moment whatever, swept out into nothingness by the current that overwhelmed him and the instancy of his need.

CHAPTER XXX

"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun."

FOR some years past, the celebration of Lord Heriot's birthday had been a great local event in the country dominated by the castle on the Gleside. Among a people so tenacious and romantic, still held by traditional loyalties, whose bones remembered the '45, whose minds still gave life to the legends and figures of the Keiths and the Macgregors, young Glen-garry and the old Earl Marischal—such anniversaries had a significance almost religious. Balmoral, too, was not far away and at Balmoral their affections and devotions were crystallized around a figure whose sacerdotal qualities their own Laird had come to share. The Auld Queen had favored Heriot. What cotter's child didn't know the story that when she saw the slim, beautiful youth, she had (for the first time in her life, perhaps) made a poetical allusion and called him, "The fated Fairy Prince!" Lord Heriot, in extenuation, was wont to plead that Her Majesty only quoted Tennyson and he laughed as he said it,—but then he was a grizzled fairy prince now.

Chance also had it that this holiday fell on a time of year when Highland weather is most to be relied on, so that to the joy of hospitalities, royally and

paternally dispensed, was added the hope of cloudless skies. At Whins, men spoke of "Heriot's weather" as they used to talk of Queen Victoria's.

The festivities proper lasted for three days, although a week hardly saw the end of them. Commonalty shared them with gentry, the first day being wholly occupied by the customary Highland sports and contests, reels and pastimes, an ox roasted on the green and bowls of punch, having noticeable effects upon the liveliness of the participants. A tenants' ball wound up what was probably the hardest day's work of Heriot's year. On the second day was the garden-party, which had won distinction from having been spoiled by rain only three times in ten years. Most of the house-guests arrived for this afternoon and remained for the big dinner and reception and the shoot which wound up the merry-making. Mr. Marrindon told somebody that the week cost Heriot little less than fifteen thousand pounds.

It was imagination, not money, however which made the thing a success. This imagination had not failed Heriot even during the sorrow of the War. By his efforts the celebration had been adroitly turned into a patriotic rally. Heriot's speeches, with their amazing verve and eloquence, his soldier-songs with their lilt and good-humor, these had kindled a fire at Whins which warmed the remotest corners of the Empire, and popular response had been so marked, as actually to give concern to a Government always in dread of the spectre of real Tory leadership.

Since then, one anniversary had passed in a particularly gay mood of victorious rejoicing which shone in contrast to the surrounding darkness of perplexity and depression. This present autumn had not found that

shadow lessened and there were those who wondered whether this small, joyous moment would pass into a tradition, like so much else in life. Then there had been the appearance on the scene of the natural daughter. Just what was likely to be the effect of this appearance occupied a good many people and incidentally formed the topic of conversation between Mr. Marrindon and Mr. Waghorn as they journeyed northward in the Edinbro' express. The former had not failed in twenty years to accept an invitation which had for him the force of a royal command. But the latter had visited Whins but seldom and his presence on the train held special significance for his colleague. Like other people, Mr. Marrindon had his ears open for current gossip and he had not failed to hear that, for the first time, Lady Champyon found herself too unwell to pay her usual autumn visits to Scotland, but had gone to the Italian Lakes instead; and the reason underlying this fact was plain, as he told his travelling companion.

"For Neuralgia read Nicole," he commented dryly, "both begin with N."

"And signify *Nothing*," snapped Mr. Waghorn.

"Do they? I'm not so sure," the other rejoined, "it's an old friendship, you know, and one that meant a great deal to his Lordship."

"Kith and kin mean most to a man as he gets on in years," remarked the senior solicitor, who sat opposite Marrindon, in his quaint black travelling cap, a decent grey rug spread over his knees. His dry, veinous hands were clasped before him and the effect of this contemplative posture was heightened by the calm of his shrivelled face and its bright, dark eyes. Mr. Marrindon knew him to be the repository of more information of a private kind than any man in the profes-

sion; and this secret under-current of knowledge had its own fascination for the younger lawyer, making him less reticent than was his habit.

"Between ourselves, I'm curious to see what will happen," said he, as he laid aside the *Times*, precisely folded. "I never disguised from anyone, least of all his Lordship, my disapproval of the whole affair."

"Heriot's impulses have always been troublesome—if picturesque," agreed Mr. Waghorn.

"A man has no right to be picturesque at his age. When I remember the trouble we had with him in '99, when he got back from the States without the dancer. He was like a madman. I was junior in those days, 'twas my affair to see how he did. We got the woman paid off at last and thought we were done with it. When this girl turned up with the Yankee school-mistress, I saw it shook him. But he let me manage and set himself to his new poetry book. And when my back was turned, I found that he'd installed her in the house as secretary! 'Twas unbecoming and indecent and I told him so, but he never listened. St. Helios thinks he can do things successfully that plain folk can not get by with."

"I know! 'Assumes the God, Affects to nod and seems to shake the spheres!'" said Mr. Waghorn pensively and the use of the quotation caused Marrindon to reflect that his companion was indeed very old-fashioned.

"However, that action was nothing to this. I said my say and he knew what I thought. From what I saw of the young lady, I imagined marriage was her object and that it would soon remove her safely out of her father's reach. I was wrong. She undermined

me," Marrindon said, half-angry, half-admiring, "and see how high she is now!"

"A perilous eminence for the moment," Mr. Waghorn observed.

"I will say, I was hurt as well as insulted. Many an office has thrown over a client for less. He never even told me what he was going to do; he never gave me a hint!"

"Tut-tut-tut!" said his brother solicitor. "And how will his people at Whins like it, d'ye think?"

This was a problem that interested Marrindon and his manner grew impressive. "Oh—that's the question and we shall see what we shall see! The next few days will tell. The attitude of the Highlanders toward their chief has not, I believe, altered in essentials since the days of Scott. They're stiff, they're dignified, they don't appreciate novelties."

"The presence of a natural child constitutes no novelty in the Highlands, if I recollect," said Mr. Waghorn dryly.

"Perhaps not, but tenantry have their inconsistencies, you know. And Tom Kellynch is popular on the Gleg-side, for some reason."

"I didn't know he was popular anywhere," the other commented. "A most objectionable fella in my opinion."

Mr. Marrindon was a little shocked at the freedom of this verdict, but he didn't show it. He proceeded to express himself more cautiously.

"Quite so, he's not my client and isn't likely to be and I'm not denying some people are of your way of thinking about him," was his rejoinder. "Still—he has his friends at Whins. On the whole, I think the folk thereabouts are partial to wild oats. It's a crop

easily raised in those parts. And they like successions to be douce and regular. If Heriot leaves this girl the money, Whins will have to be shut up or let, y'know. They won't like that."

"Quite so. But will he?"

"Who can tell? My own influence has been against it, naturally. 'Dower the girl if you will, my lord,' I've said from the first, 'give her the Pennsylvania property, by all means! But the money should go with the land and the name.'"

"I do so agree," the elder man nodded, "and yet—"

"God bless my soul, I've no confidence in him! He made me draw up an iniquitous will, but I don't believe he ever signed it. His aversion to putting his signature to any document amounts to inhibition; and then, events might take a turn——" Marrindon gave a reflective cough and paused to glance at his companion. Mr. Waghorn sat in his corner, his hands folded over the rug, his skull-cap nodding a little to the motion of the train, and his wrinkled lids dropped sleepily over his bright, observant eyes.

"You mean," he offered, as his friend hesitated, "that the left hand and the right hand might pull together, and the lady might obtain her title by the one legitimate method?"

"You surprise me, my dear friend. Has anyone been talking to you?"

"Only the ghosts of the Past," answered the old solicitor quaintly.

"Major Kellynch did drop into my office last July and suggested that he was for sale, and, as it was my business to do, I passed on the knowledge in the quarter desired. As to the effect on his Lordship I've no means of judging—you know how he can be."

"I shouldn't want a lass of mine to marry Tom Kellynch," said Mr. Waghorn.

"Oh—many's a reformed rake that's made a good husband!"

"But there's no such thing as a reformed cad."

Again Mr. Marrindon was conscious of shock and thought best to take refuge in the ritual response of an assenting. "Just so!"

The train whistled and shook itself out of York. Mr. Waghorn continued to gaze out of the window.

"In these days, the decision doesn't rest wholly with his Lordship. I may be mistaken, but I doubt if the lady will consent."

"She? She'd jump at it—you don't know her!" Mr. Marrindon gave a chuckle, "she's angled for it these two years, under my very nose. Nothing can keep her from her goal. She's all ambition, like her mother before her."

"Nobody is all anything," said the other rather cryptically and said no more. His mind turned backwards and the window out of which he looked ceased to frame for him a misty, green plain. Rather he beheld his own study in the lamplight and the fine, slender woman with the tiny waist and tilted hat of the 90's, the eyes all wet and the quivering mouth. Then another memory rose, not three months old, of two young people walking gayly over the grass at Kew—the man's intense and concentrated air, the girl's laughing, upturned face, so young, so softened. It made old Mr. Waghorn feel quite sentimental. So he didn't answer Mr. Marrindon at all; but put his head back in his corner and fell into a doze.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE conversation, however, remained in his mind as such things will and gave an especial fineness to those powers of observation which in his case were already peculiarly delicate and shrewd. Mr. Waghorn, at Whims, found himself in a mood both personal and philosophical, noting a great many things of which most of the guests were unaware, moving among them with his old-fashioned dignity, delighting his host with his quaint flavor, and his knowledgeable qualities, and sharing nothing that he came to learn with Marrindon or anybody else. Very often he appeared to doze and always he appeared to wait. For what was he waiting? Perhaps he hardly knew, perhaps it was merely to add to that stock of discreet information which we have already noticed. "Knowledge is power" must originally have thus been said of some solicitor like Mr. Waghorn; at all events the figures and the panorama of the birthday party unrolled themselves defencelessly before his penetrating gaze.

He found it very interesting and he found it a little pathetic—the latter especially, when he noted the completeness of Heriot's devotion to his daughter, manifest now to the point of being slightly ridiculous. In view of all he knew about the past, this made Mr. Waghorn sorry for Heriot.

"It's part of his punishment," he told himself, "that she's become the very apple of his eye." And the girl

evidently returned this affection, unless Marrindon was right, which his elder did not believe. If she were the venal and ambitious creature of Marrindon's depicting, why wasn't she flushed with her triumph? Why did she look so thin, so anxious and unsure? And why did her face, when her father's eye was off it, wear a look that reminded Mr. Waghorn of the Nicoletta? Was it because of the difficulties of her position? This was hard to believe since, outwardly at least, all went as it should. The tenants' day showed no abatement in the crowd or the rejoicing. Heriot's welcome—in the broad Scots which added humor and pith to his speech—was given in more than his usual happy vein, while the glancing allusion to 'my daughter' passed without awkwardness. As the Laird moved from tent to tent, from table to table, he kept the girl beside him. It was her hand and her appealing smile which bestowed the prizes in the sports or comforted the losers. The combination in Nick's manner of shyness and grace, could not have been better. If, on her approach, some elderly face stiffened a long upper lip, or glances were exchanged whose meaning was unsympathetic, one's knowledge of the people would expect no less.

Mr. Waghorn turned his attention therefore, to the house guests for some explanation. He noticed that, while there were conspicuous absences among these numbering certain of Heriot's oldest friends, like Lord Wroxeter, Lewis Cust and Lady Champyon, more of the London literary element had been included than ever before. Gilbert Cheke and his wife were there for example; Christopher Vicary, one or two young poets and one or two elderly editors. This was a change, because in the past, Heriot had rather deliber-

ately ignored the literary world, as desiring to show that he didn't need it and didn't want to be considered one of it. He wrote what and when he wished—the others were literary. They had to drum up a public to read their stuff—he didn't. He had found their society self-conscious, egoistic and touchy; they lived, he felt, in small rooms contemplating their own talents, while he dwelt in a spacious chamber and looked upon other things than his. Was their presence here now, a token that he was aware of disapproval in the great world, and desired, somewhat late in life, to take his place in their's? Mr. Waghorn wondered.

Heriot's mood appeared particularly gay and gracious—a cloudless St. Helios. As if to show how young he felt, he spent a good deal of his time with Lady Moray of Menzies, a tall, white girl, with narrow eyes and pale hair, married to a neighboring laird and who for sometime past had felt that the role of Danaë would become her. At last she seemed about to succeed in drawing Heriot's attention—that is, she averred, as much as anyone could with 'that daughter' in the offing.

Warm friends of Lady Champyon's, of course, did not fail to write her a full account of what was taking place at Whins without her. She read it, with tightening lips, under the ripening vineyards of Cadenabbia. June Moray, indeed! And only last year she had heard Heriot describe that lady as "a provocative minx!" Ah, well The sun was sinking there behind the mountains around Como, and the lake glowed with an enamelling of mauve and rose and gold. Meanwhile, Lady Champyon couldn't know how much Mr. Waghorn was sympathizing with her. That gentleman found himself in rather less of a holiday mood

than the occasion demanded. Yet the scene on which he looked, the morning of the second day, was brilliant in the extreme. There is at Whins a long terrace built against the hillside, which looks down upon the famous carpet-garden, the finest in Scotland. From the back-ground of color, the reds, yellows and blues, which filled the ovals and curves of this growing tapestry, the Keep uprose, a singular and sinister bulk, spreading as it heightened into a cluster of turrets and dominating the valley at its foot. All this framed the group of people, old and young, in gay tints or sombre, in Highland tartans or sober tweeds. The dogs ran in and out; Nicole, with two or three young girls and as many lairds, sat on the terrace stair; others marched off towards the tennis courts. The servants were busy with flowers and tables, with banners and garlands, in the tents on the lawn beyond. A doubtful blue sky smiled on the whole; and Mr. Waghorn, while acknowledging the picturesqueness of the setting, was unable to decide what kind of a play there was going to be. Comedy in Scotland, to his thinking, was somehow an anomaly.

"I don't seem to fancy any of these people," the old gentleman reflected, as he paced the lawn after luncheon. "Never could talk to Tom, and as for that Capt. Gwyn he has at his elbow—surely, he's the chap who had to leave Cairo the winter of 1913? He must be! Where the War didn't kill, it has brought back to life the most inconceivable people. My word! And where is Denis Traquair? What's happened there? He was very odd when we parted. As for the ladies, well, I seem to remember from my school days that Zeus tended to deteriorate, as he went on, when it came to female society! Not a talkable woman in the lot. I'll

have a chat with the Olympian." And he walked, a trifle stiffly, but actively enough, across the lawn to where the figure, magnificent in kilts, and surrounded by his dogs, was giving final directions to his gillie. The lawyer was amused to hear Heriot, who no sooner crossed the border than he became very Scots indeed, give a long, detailed order commencing, "Aweel, Gibbie, my man," only to be answered in the most precise possible, English, "Very good, my Lord!" by the Highlander, nearly as tall as himself.

Mr. Waghorn tucked a little smile away into the corner of his mind but never let it show.

"Your usual weather, my lord, is not, I hope, going to desert you on this occasion," he observed in his formal way, as he fell into step beside his host, who hoped not. They strolled together amid an escorting squadron of dogs, big and small, into the garden, which lay warmly sheltered behind its mellow brick wall. Heriot's manner was genial; he had more than one reason for liking the old solicitor.

"What's become of Traquair?" he asked abruptly, "I thought to have him with me today, but no word has come from him. What a passion for non-essentials the Americans have! Rushing about as they do at the whistle of their god Business—who means no more than I do, when I summon Dandie yonder." He suited act to word, and the great deerhound turned at once at his call. Mr. Waghorn saw that he wasn't pleased with Denis, so he answered tactfully.

"Surely, it's not his wish that keeps him. He has a hero-worshipping affection for your Lordship."

"I like the fella, Waghead."

"I like him myself," the lawyer agreed.

"I found him more than usually responsive," Heriot

said. "He's Scots too, at bottom . . . and there's a dash of something—imagination, perhaps?—that I'd forgotten should be packed away in Youth's portman-teau. Most of them nowadays—except my girl there—are as cold and slippery to my mind as fish. Denis has a certain fire."

Mr. Waghorn averred that he too had noticed a dash of the mousquetaire about the young American. The other remained reflective. "Yes, it is odd. 'Tis not in my memory of him that he should neither come nor write. I said so to Nick, who doesn't like him as much as I do. She's jealous as the Deil, that girl of mine, for I used to tell him things; we had great talks, he and I. He's a good listener and he liked hearing my youthful adventures, such as they were. I told him my journeys in Persia and in Greece, and I told him my belief, that the real adventures in life are those of the spirit. For example, there's my old friend Cust you know him?"

Mr. Waghorn nodded, while the speaker paused to enjoy the border of late lavender, growing against the ruddy, brick wall.

"Well, Cust, you know, has never been out of England, yet no man has had more adventures. He's forever mountin' on an elephant folio, (he has a drove of 'em calf-bound; his elephant calves, I call 'em) the sort, I mean, fairly lispin' with long S's; and off he jogs into the jungle of history, for weeks together."

Heriot had been running on, as his way was, and long afterwards, Mr. Waghorn recalled that talk with its careless color, its imagery yet more careless. He remembered it as the sort of thing which nowadays doesn't happen. Then the talker stooped to gather

the lavender spikes and pat his dog and so his mood changed. When he spoke again it was of things seen and not of things considered. His mind turned back to the Greek journey and the suggestiveness of his experiences there—of the owls on the Acropolis and the frog chorus on Lake Stymphalos. He told the sympathetic Mr. Waghorn all about his climb up Mt. St. Elias, to seek for the shrine of Zeus-Helios—so strangely transmuted by the centuries, first into a Hebrew prophet and then into a canonized Christian.

"Hence I take it, came my nickname," he concluded, "but for the purposes of this world, my dear, I'd rather methinks, be a pagan god than a Christian saint!"

Mr. Waghorn nodded agreement and privately thought he looked rather like one. Then, as they turned back toward the house, the guest drifted away, to be picked up by the Dowager Lady Strathspey, who was eager to tell somebody all about her operation of last spring, which Mr. Waghorn found exceedingly tiresome and unintelligible, for he was the possessor of an old-fashioned ignorance and knew about no organs other than those played upon in church.

As for Heriot, he escaped for the moment into his own room. There was an hour or so before luncheon and he had an idea which he wanted to put on paper. But when he sat down to write, the usual joy was lacking; that smooth, white sheet on the desk gave him no thrill. Instead, he leaned back in his chair, troublesome thoughts began to chase one another through his mind. The festivities brought with them the recall of his age, the memory of his heir. Never had Tom been a welcome topic, and Tom was present to-day to his uncle's imagination, persistently present since a recent

conversation with Marrindon. A cloud drew over the sun; a heavy frown lined his face and aged it.

What Marrindon told him, frankly urging as he told, would be undoubtedly the solution of a difficult problem—and yet! His daughter would take her rightful place, in fullness of time be Lady Heriot and St. Helier's,—and yet! Probably Tom would settle down, worse men than he had done so. If only he had not seen fit to bring that cad to Whins and set him to work. Yet . . . Yet . . . Yet! A brutal word, and one that Heriot had always tried to omit from his own vocabulary.

Nick was young; what had youth meant to St. Helios? He warmed himself now by its ashes. As he sat there, he relaxed and let old memories make their entrance on the stage. He saw a shape, all amber and scarlet, glittering like a toy, infinitely bright and joyous,—which stood poised taut like an arrow on the bow-string,—and then, like an arrow, launched into flight, into the rapidest motion . . . the most sinuous grace! Amazed by this recollection, he was charmed by it as by music; when it clouded and vanished, there was left a mist of regret. His mood was suddenly broken by the noise in the corridor of a group of young people leaving the next room, all laughter and talk.

Who was it said; "Wait a minute, I'll ask Father?"

Oh distant and recaptured dream! "Why, that's the child's dear voice!" he told himself; and was moved so deeply that he wondered.

Marrindon had sagaciously prophesied, though in private, "'Tis the garden party will show us where we stand with the country." Therefore he as well as Mr. Waghorn watched the day draw to its close and found his conclusion much what he had expected. That fewer

guests came might easily be accounted for by the fact that Heriot's weather failed him after all, and a grey afternoon, with a fine rain toward night, might well be a discouragement. For undoubtedly, although Denis met many vehicles in the road, yet they were fewer than in past years; an acquainted eye would have noted some conspicuous absences among them. Mr. Waghorn, quietly observing and philosophizing, did not let it escape him that the guests who came were less gay and less at ease. Was this because Heriot, underneath his graciousness, seemed tired and lacking his usual verve? Perhaps. The daughter in her diamonds seemed strangely nervous and unsure; the nephew was entirely too easy and self-confident. By all rights, it should have been the other way about. And what did the girl mean by absenting herself for quite a long time, just as most of the guests were taking their departure, leaving Tom, as it were, to do the honors? A great mistake!—the lawyer thought, and shook his head.

At his age Mr. Waghorn found parties confusing and fatiguing, so early in the evening he retired to an easy chair in a corner of the great hall, where in due time he was joined by other elderly gentlemen of similar inclinations, many of them members of the New Club at Edinburgh, which is so named because its origins are lost in antiquity. There they sat, this well-ripened group and chatted about politics, agriculture and legal antiquities, until the party broke up and the other old gentlemen went home.

But Mr. Waghorn remained.

He had observed that as the last guest departed, Major Tom came back into the hall and approached his uncle with a manner that held an underlying pur-

pose. —Saying no word, Lord Heriot turned and the two men, uncle and nephew, passed through the room to a door which led to the Armoury. Mr. Waghorn noticed that they walked in silence, their faces turned the one from the other. He saw Tom open the door for the elder man and follow him into the room, closing it after them both. Then glancing up, Mr. Waghorn observed that Clayton was standing before him.

"Was you thinking of going up, sir, if I may ask?" the butler inquired, "the young gentlemen and ladies are still in the billiard room. Shall I leave the whiskey and soda on the table there and have the fire mended?"

"You may," answered the old gentleman deliberately, "I'll not be going up for a bit."

When the man had disappeared, he settled himself more deeply in his comfortable chair, laid his finger tips meditatively together, and stared into the pleasant firelight. He had more than ever an air of *waiting*.

CHAPTER XXXII

AT WHINS, the Armoury is the oldest part of the house, and dates from the time when Lady Macbeth was a little girl learning tapestry work. Later it had been the Guard Room until the Keep was built, and there might still be seen marked on the walls the divisions where the clansmen of those days had stabled their horses. A long room, with a vaulted ceiling, somewhat inadequately lighted by a double tier of small windows and entered only by a single, heavy, oak-studded door, it had served the Heriots of two centuries past as a family museum. While the walls proper were low, the vaulting gave plenty of space and on the arches and in the niches between them, a collection of weapons was displayed. Banners hung over crossed halberds, pikes and clumsy arquebuses; one niche held a group of cross-handled swords of the period of William Wallace; another housed a group still earlier in date, whose picks, crude axes and hammers with stone heads found in a barrow on the estate, suggested the warfare of the Picts and the Scots. Stands of armor took the place of statuary; in front of the immense, hooded fireplace with its carved escutcheon, animal skins were spread and padded chairs placed, in an attempt to mollify this otherwise rather harsh and cold atmosphere.

For many generations the Armoury had been used only as a museum, Heriot's unimaginative forebears

preferring to dwell in the homely, more sheltered rooms above, surrounded by the experiments of their women-folk in Georgian woolwork and Victorian water-colors. Perhaps for reasons of climate, the Scottish nobility have never cared for that vast acreage of drawing-rooms which the English consider so indispensable; their castles show many chambers of moderate size. The present lord's temperament, however, found this strange big place congenial; and he made it a favorite smoking and sitting-room, especially at night. He had a desk there, at which he did some desultory writing; the isolation of the room, which was reached only by the one entrance, gave it value to his mind on account of its privacy. He had added to the furnishing a remarkable collection of Thibetan devil-dancers' masks, which glared down from the walls with every species of hideous contortion or furious grotesquerie. The effect as one entered was apt to be particularly bizarre and horrible.

Although empty, the room was still lighted. The air here seemed fresh and cool after the warmth and crowd of the reception-hall. A fire had been burning, but was now sunk into red coals. Major Tom's first act, after following his uncle in and closing the door, was to put on fuel and blow the embers till it caught. A pleasant flame blossomed toward the chimney and shone on his face as he bent to the task. Heriot watched him in silence. Major Kellynch remained bent for quite a few minutes, as if he desired to warm his hands. His face wore an odd expression.

Then he straightened up to remark in his most direct manner: "The Duke left rather early, didn't he? Last year he did not order the car till close on midnight."

"Did not he? I don't remember," said Heriot, coldly.

"I missed the Bothwells . . . and it's the first time in my memory that we didn't have a visit from the Master of Lochleven. Perhaps it was the weather; it's a disagreeable, thick evening. You weren't so lucky as usual in that respect, sir, were you?"

These observations were of the type that a woman makes oftener than a man. Heriot was perfectly aware of their malice, but preferred to let them pass unnoticed. He was feeling more tired by the last two days than was his wont and he hated the forthcoming interview, which circumstances had forced upon him.

"Your own contribution to the festivities was one we could have done without," was his rejoinder, in the satirical tone which he knew to be especially irritating to his nephew—"Where did you pick up the gallant Capt. Gwyn, may I ask? Is he one of the dazzling intellectuals who illuminate Miss Birdie Keenan's salon?"

"Jack is not a bad fellow—" was Tom's sulky reply.

"Oh, not bad at all for a creditor," Heriot commented. He had taken his stand on the bear-skin in front of the blaze, which glinted when he moved upon the golden-hilted dirks, and his tone was still coolly ironical. He clasped his hands behind his back and looked down at his heir with no friendly eye. "You've had a goodish bit of money out of me, Tom, lately, enough to pay your debts without saddling me with your creditors at Whins—don't you think?"

Major Kellynch did not appear disconcerted.

"What have you against Jack, Uncle Ian?" he asked, while to himself, he smiled.

"His interest in my private affairs, which he was

good enough to talk over with the Duke, wasn't long in reaching me. Did you expect me to pass it by unnoticed? He leaves us tomorrow before breakfast, I'm happy to say."

"He didn't tell me so," said Tom, a trifle startled at this unaccustomed display of spirit on the part of his easy-going relative.

"Probably he wasn't aware of the fact when you last parted. When he goes up to his room he'll find a pressin' reason to take the early train in the morning." He paused, feeling perhaps that he had been for the moment sufficiently *grand seigneur*. Then he spoke, no longer ironical but frank, and even kindly.

"However, 'tis not Gwyn that's bothering me. Dirt like that is easily brushed off. It's you, Tom, I want settlement with. Things have drifted to a pass between us that needs clearin' up, 'specially after what I was told tonight."

Major Kellynch couldn't have been honester or more prompt in his response to this attitude.

"Just so, Uncle Ian. I'm sorry I ever asked the fella. Yet I never knew him to be indiscreet. Is it possible he said anything regarding Miss Kellynch—?"

"We'll leave my daughter's name out of this discussion," Heriot commanded in his stateliest accents.

"Quite so—if you wish. But you spoke of clearing the ground. And you can't fail to realize," proceeded the speaker, still employing a blunt and regretful manner, "that the whole affair and her appearance here has made a lot of talk. There's no use being surprised or hurt about it."

Lord Heriot, with a steady gaze upon the younger man, began insensibly to be somewhat impressed. There was nothing resentful in Tom's voice. Evidently he

was making, for the first time in his life, a deliberate and intelligent attempt to win his uncle's sympathy. Instinctively, he felt that his best line was respectful frankness, finesse he had not by nature. Identification of himself with Heriot's interests was a natural and comprehensible attitude: he assumed and maintained it.

Heriot said: "You think so?" but he paused to wonder if he had not been carried too far by his own annoyance. Maybe he had misjudged Tom. After all,—he reflected with a wince,—Tom was the legitimate heir and therefore must inevitably become the focus of current gossip. Heriot disliked intensely the realization of his own share in these events—disliked it—but couldn't escape it. For an instant his readiness failed him; he didn't quite know what to say to Tom. Glancing instinctively into the furthest recesses of the room, he saw something that came to his rescue as a diversion. One of the heavy-headed stone hammers, which had last been used in the hand of some skin-clad, woad-painted savage, had fallen from its nail to hang, loosely dangling, from the trophy overhead. Heriot walked toward it, stretched up in his great height, gave a jerk and pulled it down.

"I'd have done that, Uncle Ian," Tom hastened to observe politely, "only you are so much taller and stronger than I or anyone else on the place." The words and their flattery restored Heriot; he breathed his accustomed air once more. He stood, turning the stone-headed weapon curiously in his hand.

"The nail has rusted . . . it came away very easily. No, thanks, I'll have it replaced tomorrow. What skin-clad brute wielded it last, I wonder? 'Tis heavy enough to be dangerous. I'll leave it here."

He laid the hammer on a table, returned to the hearth-rug, and with a newer mood of tolerance, waved his nephew to a seat. Major Kellynch took a chair and sat therein, passive.

"As you suggest, maybe we had better clear the ground, especially in view—well, clear it anyhow. 'Tisn't you I mind talkin' with and I had meant myself to open the subject. You should have shut that bounder's mouth, y' know, if you had any loyalty. But let it go. Maybe my actions are a thought sudden to some of our friends—I'm impulsive by nature—never did believe in dilly-dally. And after all—I did what was my right to do."

Tom said, "I've not disputed your right, Uncle Ian," in a tone still of quiet firmness. Inwardly he was well pleased, because he felt that by his skill he had jockeyed his uncle into a position more nearly that of apology than he had ever anticipated.

"Well, I've done as it pleased me to do and that's that. Even in this scared, uneasy age of our's—" he broke off and began to murmur a quotation. "Suppose you don't understand that?" he asked, looking down on his heir.

"Not a word," answered Tom composedly, while he was thinking: "how long-winded the old fella is getting!"

"Never did have any furniture in that head of yours, did you? Bare and noisy as a railway station. However, as for the agreeable Capt. Gwyn, '*requiescat in profundis*,' as the medievalists have it. That isn't the main thing I wanted to talk about. Concerning the subject matter of his gossip, I'm willing to say just *this*:" he accented his words weightily, and with dignity, "When I decided to take my own child into

me house—I counted the cost and I've paid it. The chit-chat of Mayfair and an hour less of the Duke's old stories is a small bill to pay, after all, and if you were capable of understandin' me, I might enlarge on that theme."

Tom had the sense to remain silent. Heriot resumed. "But as my heir, I do owe you a statement of my intentions, and I decided to make it here and now, while Marrindon is in the house."

"Thank you," his nephew said, and there was an underlying note in the restrained civility of this reply which made Heriot look at him.

"Very good—. The social emphasis of my action then, lies as I wish and will be handled by me as I see fit. As for the world's opinion—either one belongs to the people who consider society, or one belongs to those whom society considers. The financial side—which I judge interests you the most——?"

"Naturally, Uncle Ian."

"Naturally, as you say, for who plucks figs from thistles? The financial is not yet entirely determined to my mind—the extent I mean of my plans, because *naturally* I expect to make Nicole the inheritress of whatever money is not drawn from the estate."

Again, with praiseworthy self-control, Tom kept silent, although if thought could have struck dead that handsome, assured figure on the hearth-rug, murderous wish was not lacking. His silence was attributed by his uncle to shock, and the perception of what this fiat might mean to Tom caused him to go on more gently.

"I don't say but what—had you been different, Tom, more like a son to me—an heir to be proud of—this wouldn't have happened. A son's a son, when all's

said. But trouble's been your messenger, my lad, all your life——"

He paused and once more he noted the moderation of Tom's reply.

"No use pretending it isn't a blow, is there? Pretty near the end of me, eh what? Can't keep up without the stuff these days. You know that. You say you've counted the cost, so I take it you don't mind seeing some damned outsider or other sit down in your place at Whins. As for me, I can't help it if I'm just a plain chap and never could keep my end up with you about books and all that. 'Tisn't my fault. And as for the other things,—well, I've chucked a lot of 'em lately. Yes: I know you've given me money now and again and I've thanked you for it, but I'm the heir after all; *that* ought to stand for me."

Lord Heriot saw no reason for making any direct answer to this appeal; money given was given and he was too much of a 'grand seigneur' to like recalling it. He brushed the whole sordid dust of it away from him with a gesture of the hand, and turned to look straight at Tom.

"Marrindon came to me a month ago with a suggestion from you," he remarked conversationally.

"Yes?"

"When he made it, first, I wouldn't listen. I'd but just got my girl to meself and had no wish to part with her. And I can't say I'd ever visualized you, my lad, with your wild-oats harvested and well out of sight. But after all, under certain conditions, I think there may be something in it."

"That was some time ago."

The words were spoken with a modest firmness and

the voice held a meditative quality which the elder man hardly recognized.

"You've changed your mind since?" he asked, "You feel your unworthiness, perhaps?"

Tom gave a click in his throat. "If you want it out, Uncle Ian, we'll have it out—you asked for it, remember—not I! Not I! You've called me names for years—but I have tried to spare you. 'Twasn't I from whom that proposition came originally, Uncle Ian—it was your—secretary."

"Be careful, Tom!"

"You said to clear the ground, so you've got to listen. Your secretary—came to me and made a cold-blooded proposition. 'An offensive and defensive alliance' she called it. This was before you sent her down to Trampen Park and she became Miss Kellynch. No doubt she's devoted to you now—but she *hated* you then like poison. And I'm not making chance shots—I've letters of her's (only I'd far rather you didn't see them,) that show what she thought of you."

Heriot's face darkened, his brows drew together, his eyes were set: "Make no charges against Nicole behind her back—" he began.

"Send for her, then! She can't answer—you'll see for yourself she can't deny it. You keep sticking women in my teeth, but when in your life have you been free of 'em? And your—secretary—is the worst of the lot. Now she's got what she angled for—she's on the top of the tree—she'd like to forget the dirt of the New York streets that stuck to her ten years ago. No: I'm not talking in the air. When she came to me she wasn't after family affection. She wanted to be Lady Heriot and St. Helier's, in despite of you and all the world! If I listened, who wouldn't, know-

ing he was going to be a pauper and a titled pauper at that? Moreover, *then* I didn't know all about the muckheap she came out of! Now I do: and if she wants me—by God! she's got to pay for me!"

The words—dreadful words—were winged with a conviction that sent them straight to the mark. They pierced deeply. After all, this was Tom speaking, the heir, a Kellynch. Heriot's movement was uncertain, stricken; and Tom exulted when he saw it.

"You consulted nobody when you took the girl into your home. What proof, real proof, have you that she is your own child? A few letters and the word of an old woman who *looked* respectable. Nothing more. And then you give everything into her charge—your business affairs—your correspondence. Why, she boasted to me that she kept back Marrindon's letters whenever it suited her!"

"You liar!"

"Ask her!" his voice rose, edged with triumph.

"Ask her, I say!"

There came a knock at the door.

CHAPTER XXXIII

"FATHER—here's Denis!"

Nick swept in.

Heriot looked startled—not pleased. Then his gracious habit asserted itself and he came forward to greet his friend.

"My dear chap! Why didn't you telephone? Did you find a fly at the station? You *walked*, my dear? Can it be possible? At this hour—! However——"

Denis felt the control imposed to keep the situation within decorous limits, as he read with affection the pallor, the droop of that handsome face into anxiety. The second person in the room had turned his back to the others, while he feigned a sudden absorption in a stand of 15th century coat-of-mail.

"You must be tired after such a tramp," Denis heard Heriot's voice going on mechanically—"my people will show you to your room and tomorrow we'll have a good talk. Meanwhile, I am busy at the moment with Tom here——"

"But that's just it, father! That's the reason why Mr. Traquair has come!"

My lord seemed newly aware of his daughter who spoke so boldly. There she stood and the lift of her head made the diamonds glitter while she looked at him. Her gaze, her lips were fearless. Her whole figure vibrated with a tense excitement, as a rider holds to check his high-spirited horse, conscious of its im-

patient power. Just so had her mother made her entrance while the parquet crashed into applause. Nicoletta's daughter—madness to doubt it! Her clear voice went steadily on

"I know what Major Tom was going to say to you tonight. Mr. Traquair knows You'll let me defend myself—you'll let him defend me? It would be only fair!"

No weakness in eye and manner—yet! Heriot turned from her, troubled. Before he could answer, Tom's hard, indignant accents broke in

"I shall wait, Uncle Ian, till you and I can talk in private. Miss Kellynch knows I have the proof of what I say. If you don't mind strangers being present . . I do. I'll go."

"One moment, please," his uncle answered gravely, and Tom waited, chafing. After a pause of consideration, Lord Heriot addressed the new arrival.

"Am I to understand, Traquair, that you are acquainted with these family matters—that you are in possession of Nick's confidence?"

"I am, sir."

"How came this about?"

"Chance put me in a position to help Miss Kellynch. You shall hear everything."

"But if she was in need of help, then what Tom says is not wholly false?"

"That depends, sir."

An evasion, plainly. Denis was aware of the weakness of his reply, yet at the moment it suited him to make no other. He took chances; but complete honesty was the only foundation on which he could safely build his case. He was prepared therefore for Tom's sneering laughter.

"You hear, Uncle Ian? What a farce it all is!"

"There is much, sir, you should be told and here and now is best; this matter has gone too far. On Miss Kellynch's account, I ask you to give me the chance to sift it to the bottom in her presence. Major Kellynch shall have every opportunity to explain himself." He spoke with studied moderation and persuasiveness. These took the older man by assault, as Denis foresaw. Heriot, looking bewildered at the young and confident figure, noticed for the first time that he was holding in his hand a bundle of papers, tied about with tape. Heriot hated papers tied about with tape—but there was his nephew lowering, and Nicole quivering before him with her imploring eyes.

"I should much prefer," the American continued in a firm manner, "that Mr. Marrindon be sent for. It's better, I am sure. May I ring, sir?" and he waited with intense anxiety until——

"Oh—anything you like!" Heriot cried, and flung himself down in his chair, with a hand over his tired eyes.

The room was quiet as Marrindon entered, looking flustered. Passing through the hall, he had received from the old man seated there, a slight, pregnant wave of the hand, which had disturbed him more than the summons. As for Denis, he heard a series of interchanges, while yet he himself was sunk in a supreme concentration. He was aware of Nick's nearness, of her hurried breathing, of Heriot's beautiful, remembered voice, trying to explain something to the solicitor, against the protests of his nephew, who found what he was going to say just five times more awkward than he had expected.

It was one thing for Tom to tell his story with the

twists and turns adapted to take effect upon his uncle's particular temperament; but quite another to state his case before four hostile auditors, two of whom were lawyers! But he didn't go as he threatened, because he saw very clearly that if he did so he went for good and took his chance with him—and he had far too strong a hand for that.

This Denis saw and felt and he also saw the long room stretched away into unfamiliar vaulting, the criss-cross, zig-zag patterns made by the flint-locks and spears, the halberds and battleaxes hanging high above the grinning row of devil-faces, the small group of people gathered around the fire, whose red eye stared up at them malevolently, as from a beast crouched to spring, the oak door studded with iron bolts and clamps—and all this, the room, the people, the exotic background, gave him the sense that he was the spectator at a play. Somehow it seemed to stand for a poignancy and a picturesqueness which were passing, or were about to pass. Even Heriot, the epitome of it all—the protagonist of the drama, even he, shared this evanescent quality. Nothing was real except Nick, himself, and the passionate love which set them apart from the rest.

But Marrindon was speaking. Denis shook the veil of nervous illusion from his spirit. Keen he must be, if ever in his life.

"Mistake—misunderstanding, no doubt Major Tom will be the first to acknowledge it," the solicitor was saying in his most soothing family manner "high-spirited heir—difficult position . . . just so! Quite! Miss Kellynch will pardon us if we go into it—as his lordship wishes?"

"As I wish, too," said Nick.

"Then perhaps we'd better sit?" She took the offered chair but only as a bird lights. Neither of the young men seemed to have heard Mr. Marrindon's conciliatory invitation.

"Now," said he fussily, "if Major Kellynch will tell us what he has to say, perhaps——?"

Nobody paid any attention to Marrindon. Tom kept his hands in his pockets and his eye was cold, Denis stood behind Nick's chair, watching Tom.

"Well, I'd have spared Uncle Ian if I could. I *have* spared him——" Major Kellynch asserted from his position in their midst. "It's he—not *I*, mind!—wants his dirty linen washed in public, it seems. Very good. You all know the girl turned up in 1910 and did the domestic pathetics on Uncle Ian's doorstep. I was out of England, but Marrindon there found her credentials satisfactory and the woman in charge of her seemed respectable. She *was*, for all I know. The girl's mother was dead, in Buenos Aires, where she had gone professionally, leaving this child behind, but no money. What I found out later was that she had been living with a family named Hegner, who kept a theatrical boarding-house on the outside, and on the inside—something else. Also, I heard, that all that summer before the old school teacher got hold of her, this girl was hanging about ready to go with any man who shook a ten dollar bill at her!"

"Come, come, Major Tom, these are atrocious, these are actionable statements," interrupted Marrindon, with a side-glance at his patron's ghastly face.

"Tcha! Don't I tell you, my good man, I know what I'm talking about?"

"Your lordship knows I had several interviews with

Miss Wylie. She was a perfectly decent, even a Puritanical person. She would never——”

“Either she didn’t know,” Tom broke in fiercely, “or being her kind, she thought she’d rescue the child from the Hegners. Who blames her—not I! Can’t you see that the moment they learned who the child’s father was and what they might get out of him, there was every motive for hushing the thing up? Do you want me to go on or have you had enough?”

A deadly silence followed. Tom looked at his uncle. Heriot slowly turned his head, raised his hand and said in a level tone, “Go on!”

“I’m sorry, Uncle, Ian—I am, really,” and Major Kellynch presented the happiest aspect of honest regret and reluctance—“if I’d only known all this earlier! But naturally I supposed you had the proper advice, that Marrindon here had safeguarded your interests. I had no occasion to investigate the character of the young person in question—no—not even when she came back from France and set up as your secretary. Of course, you know yourself how people talked.” He paused again, but none of his auditors appeared anxious to interrupt him. “It was after she came to me with the proposition I should marry her There was something so cold-blooded about it, though I won’t deny I considered it, and so I told Marrindon. But there were other things she did. I knew she’d kept back your letters because she told me so. I knew she hated you like poison. She told me that, too. But anyway, the more I thought about it the more it scared me, so I set some friends of mine on the track and all this came out. It was no more, after all, than one might have expected.”

He ended and several voices spoke at once. “Your

lordship knows that no such idea as this ever entered my mind! No intimation——”

“Father, you don’t believe——?”

“Lord Heriot—will you permit me?”

Toward the last speaker, Heriot sent a haggard glance, a glance proudly asking for help, and Denis saw it. He shifted his position against the mantle-piece.

“If Major Kellynch will allow me to ask him a question or two?”

“I deny the right of any stranger to question me,” was the furious answer, but Heriot’s voice came slowly in, word after word, controlled and brave

“Please, Tom—for my—sake—you can do no less.”

“I only wished to point out,” said Denis, and nothing could have been more disarming than his voice, “that Major Kellynch realizes his story is entirely hearsay. He tells us that he made enquiries ‘later’ and yet that he heard ‘all that summer’ about the misconduct of which he speaks. How does this happen?”

Tom restrained himself to answer, “I heard about it all that summer right enough! ’Twas town-talk. Only, I did not of course, until very much later, connect these stories with my uncle’s secretary.”

“I see. You had no personal knowledge of these events then. You learned of them only from someone else?”

Tom was a good horseman, accustomed to daring jumps. He took one now.

“I know what I’m talking about. D’ ye think I’d say it else? I was there when it happened and I know what——”

"Oh," said Denis, "you had met Miss Kellynch before she appeared in England?"

"Met her? Of course not. I tell you, *then* I didn't connect her with the same girl. If I had, would I have kept quiet?"

He made this outraged appeal to his uncle, but Heriot didn't lift his head. Heriot was suffering as only one of his temperament could suffer—as he had suffered only once in his life before.

"I think perhaps you had better explain to us the sources of your information—" the American quietly urged; and it was then that Tom, looking about the group, began to realize his unchallenged success. There was Marrindon, nervously biting his lips; and one had only to glance at Lord Heriot! The girl was plucky; she sat twisting her hands together in an agony, but silent . . . he needn't fear her any longer, evidently. As for this boy they trusted in,—he was no use, one might as well go on and satisfy him. As Tom began, he was warmed with surprise; how easy, how easy it had been! Why, she had put up no fight at all!

"Tis perfectly simple. The mother had been a popular dancer. Some people thought the girl would go on the stage. She chose another profession, it seems," he smiled and his smile made the room swim before Denis' eyes. "Men I knew talked about it for that reason—you know."

"And this was where?"

"New York—I told you!"

"I beg your pardon—you did. And what year?"

"The summer of 1910."

"You were in New York all of the summer of 1910?"

Tom Kellynch drew his eyebrows together with an appearance of careful accuracy.

"Not all of it. 'Twas hot as Tophet. I got out for part of it—visiting friends."

"But you returned there in September, I suppose—as you heard what was going on?"

The first imperceptible shade of hesitation showed itself in the other's manner, but his reply was prompt.

"Yes—I suppose so—but what has this farrago to do with the fact?"

"Perhaps very little," Denis allowed, and so patiently that Nick, in her desperate faith, could hardly believe her ears. "But we wish to make it quite clear. Was it August or September, 1910, you heard these stories?"

"August . . . September, too, no doubt. It was going on then."

"Can you give us the names of your informants?"

Major Kellynch had not quite realized how much importance would be attached to the witnesses that he was prepared to muster, over and above his personal assertions and recollections. For this contingency he had not arranged as fully as he ought and therefore like other people in his position, he began to improvise some support of his statements, with an especial emphasis on what they were asking him.

"I have one or two of them in writing and there were others I can recall. Upstairs I've letters and cables to confirm everything I say, if Uncle Ian and Marrindon want to see them . . ." he said, pointedly omitting Denis.

"These documents support your statement then, that Mme. Nicoletta's daughter was leading a fast life during the summer of 1910?"

"Haven't I said so? What the devil do you keep repeating it for?"

Denis turned toward Heriot's chair. "Only to show your lordship how easily mistakes can be made. Your daughter was not in New York from June to September, 1910. The Hegner family took a cottage on a Maine island and she spent the summer with them there."

In the small silence which fell suddenly Nick sprang up, crying out wildly—"But father, you don't believe!—You couldn't!—Father you couldn't!" Catching Denis's look, she as suddenly sat down again, just as Heriot, with a faint gleam in his eye, glanced across at his nephew.

"Try again, Tom," he said composedly. Major Kellynch shrugged, but did not appear greatly disconcerted.

"It's his word against mine. Most people, I fancy, will take mine."

"Most people and the Courts will take the evidence of record. We do not lack it, sir. Here is a copy of the cottage-lease; the testimony of the postmaster of the village and that of other persons, as to the members of the Hegner household and their reputation. To that we are prepared to add the testimony of their neighbors in New York, where Mrs. Hegner still lives. It was not a congenial home for Miss Kellynch; chiefly because Mrs. Hegner resented having the child left on her hands when she had expected money. It's true she expected to put her charge into a shop and was making such arrangements. But Major Kellynch is wholly misinformed as to her character and the character of her house; and he will have difficulty in proving

in any court of law that she was other than a common, very disagreeable, but quite respectable woman."

Denis, in this last sentence, appealed to Marrindon, but the solicitor's expression was unresponsive and the American saw that it was waste of time to look for aid in that quarter. Marrindon, in fact, resented Denis's presence in the discussion. The solicitor had no love for Major Kellynch, while the latter's behavior in this matter shocked him profoundly; but every instinct of his training and temperament went to support the legitimate heir against the bastard. All he wished was to assist his patron to check any further revelations and then to rid themselves of both these intruders as speedily as might be.

CHAPTER XXXIV

WITH the skirmish that had just taken place came a re-adjustment of certain elements in the group about the fireplace. Nick drooped less heavily against her chair and Mr. Marrindon fell to polishing his spectacles. Heriot took his hand from his eyes, while his heart ceased for an instant to repeat with each beat, "My fault, my fault, my fault!" Major Tom was aware of a halt in the triumphal march of his revelations. He took his hands out of his pockets and substituted for a manner of resentment at being questioned, the simpler attitude of being anxious to be proved wrong. Denis, who was careful not to look at him, noticed his next words.

"I'm sure, for Uncle Ian's sake, I hope I am mistaken, but 't isn't possible, I fear. I too have letters to show. My friend Max Andréas wrote me all about it—and then, you see, I spent so much time in their set that summer and I heard about the young person over and over again. It was all going on, you see, when I was there."

"Yet you said nothing when she appeared in London the same autumn!" said Marrindon shortly.

"I never came back to England till the following year, and certainly I wasn't consulted, either by you or Uncle Ian. There was nothing to mark it in my mind; one doesn't waste much thought on tales about

Broadway flappers," said Kellynch coolly—"moreover, I had my own affairs to think of——"

"As Major Kellynch says, he had his own affairs to think of," Mr. Traquair repeated with a smoothness which caused the elder lawyer to glance at him—"You told us, I think, that you spent that summer in New York?" he asked Tom.

"Most of it, except when I was making visits."

"Did your visits include a yachting cruise?"

Major Tom replaced his hands in his pockets as if there was something there he wanted to hold on to.

"I believe it did—what of it?"

"Was your host a Mr. Gerald Vincey and his boat the *Angélique*?"

"What business is it of yours?" burst finally from Tom. "I refuse to answer!"

"You have answered. May I point out," Denis said, addressing Heriot, "that the *Angélique* left New York on July 20th and that owing to circumstances over which she had no control, neither she nor her passengers returned to that city for months? Major Kellynch's summer in New York therefore is nearly as mythical as your daughter's!"

"Look here, Uncle Ian," the other broke out, stepping forward and speaking with all he could manage of outraged dignity. "You can't let this go on. From the first, I've protested against a stranger being admitted to these very private affairs. You and Marrindon can ask me what you please, but I'll be shot if I'll stand being hectored by this Yankee lawyer about my own business, which has no earthly connection with the matter in hand. He's doing it to get his fee out of the girl. I know them, and I tell you I won't stand for it!"

"You will answer what you are asked," his uncle quietly replied, "if only in your own interests. We're going to the bottom of this business, here and now."

"I shall not!"—Tom shouted and made for the door. But Heriot had risen, a commanding figure, and had the bell-pull in his hand.

"Do I need to remind you I am J.P.? No, I think not! I've dealt with cases like yours and in this very room. 'Tisn't England, mind. Macdougall knows my signals. Two rings and the gate will be shut and the men ready to pick up anyone they may find comin' out of the place. I am accountable to nobody in me own house."

He turned, with a gesture, to Denis. "Go on, Traquair! I shall be the judge whether what you state is pertinent."

Denis thought best to obey him without further preamble. He stood before them, speaking slowly, weightily, referring once or twice to the papers in his hand. Thus he told as clearly and succinctly as he was able, the story with which we are familiar, the story of the cruise of the yacht *Angélique*.

When he paused after the narrative, no one interrupted. He could hear Nick's hurried breathing, which gave him courage, but not so much courage as the fact that all their eyes waited for his next words. He held them: from that moment till the end, he was the dominant figure of the group.

"It is necessary to speak of the five men who took part in these incidents," he continued. "The owner, Gerald Vincey, never socially recovered from his connection with the scandal of Gordon's death; later he himself was killed in the Argonne. Of the three guests, one was a man named Floyd Calcott, standing

much in the same position as Major Kellynch, whom he had met in South America, that is, he was badly in need of money and hoped that gambler's luck would come to his rescue on the voyage. As for the third man, he chanced to be an individual infinitely more greedy, resourceful and unscrupulous than either of his two companions. His real name, it seems, was Arthur O'Byrne, and he had recently been refused a passage on the *Mauretania* for having successfully carried out during another voyage, a scheme very similar to that which he projected on the *Angélique*. I shall return to this gentleman. On this occasion, his arrangements were wholly upset by the suicide of his victim, an incident on which he had not counted and which at once placed him in a situation that he had not bargained for. I have here," Traquair said, holding out a sheaf of typewritten papers, "copies of the report at the inquest held in Boston. There seems no doubt that an effort had been made by the owner and his guests, to dispose of the boy's body privately and give out that he had fallen overboard in an accident. They were balked in this plan by their sailing-master, who had risked his own life trying to save the suicide, and by the crew, who were straight, God-fearing Maine men and offered what practically amounted to mutiny at the suggestion. The *Angélique* had to be taken into port with Gordon's body on board and after the inquest,—during the latter part of September,—Major Kellynch and his friend Mr. Floyd Calcott went off big game shooting in the Rockies and didn't re-appear in New York until the following winter. They were lucky in that the Vincey family was anxious to keep the affair as quiet as possible. The inquest, however, makes interesting reading. I might note in passing, that in

Egypt during the preceding year, Arthur O'Byrne had passed under the alias of Max Andréas."

A heavy stillness settled on the room. Only Denis's voice pierced it

"Unfortunately—or perhaps I should say fortunately?—the inquest brought nothing to light on which legal action could be taken. Everybody had been drinking—the dead boy, so the sailors thought, had been kept continuously drunk. But no one had been present during the card-game which preceded his death; no one could say what actually happened, nor could anyone deny the story adhered to by Major Kellynch and his associates, that his heavy losses had been the cause of his act. This assertion was in a sense confirmed by the discovery of his I.O.U.'s to a very large amount. But I am stating the truth, my lord," the speaker proceeded, dropping his tone into a deeper note, "when I say that no one present at that inquest believed their story for an instant. I tell it you, that you may see how much reliance is to be placed on Major Kellynch's word or the word of his associates. He was not in New York when he says he was, and he never heard what he states he heard of Mme. Nicoletta's daughter. He has invented this whole story, just as he invented the story of the end of that wretched lad who everybody believed was blackmailed to his death."

"How—how dare you!" Major Tom shouted. He stood on the outskirts of the group and all eyes were on him. "It's a lie and I can prove it! Why, I never even took a hand in the game that night I'd smashed up my fingers on one of the boats and——"

Nick's voice sounded, startled and clear. "Then it

was you—that man with the bandaged hand who was making signals to the others? I thought so!”

“Nick,” said her father sternly—“what are you saying? How came you into this?”

“Why, father, you can’t have forgotten—it was that summer I spent on the island. I told you—how I upset in my canoe and Denis pulled me out. You’ve not forgotten? Father, you remember?”

Her pleading voice—her clear eyes——!

“My lord, I am sure . . .”

“Be quiet, Marrindon, and listen. Let her speak.”

“I often took the canoe out on a calm night and that evening I paddled toward the yacht, she was so bright. For awhile I listened to the phonograph the sailors were playing. They sang, too. Then the port above my head attracted me and I thought it would be fun to climb up and peek in. I was only sixteen and the adventure appealed to me. So I did: and there was a cabin and four men playing cards. One was a boy and he was very drunk. There was a fifth man who stood with his back to me. His hands were bandaged up. He stood behind the boy and as I looked, I saw him make a signal, so—” she waved her hand once, twice—“One of the players jumped up and turned on the boy. They all began to shout and it frightened me. I slithered down again into the canoe and pushed her away and somehow, she upset. Denis heard the splash and saved my life.”

Her words fell upon that pause of crisis like stones into water. A coal dropped into the fireplace. Tom Kellynch moved a pace and his face was distorted into a mask of fury. He gave a helpless, choking cry and his hand, groping on the table near him, closed around the haft of the stone-hammer lying there. It

whirled suddenly in an arc above his head as he launched it formidably at the girl. She saw and dodged. The hammer glancing, hit the chimney piece, rebounded and struck the tall man in Highland dress standing on the hearth—struck him a terrible blow on the back, just above the heart.

Moments followed, crowded with noise and movement, terror and confusion, Nick's cry as her father staggered, the immediate appearance in the room of Mr. Waghorn and the servants, the frenzy of all their voices raised together, the struggle with Tom Kellynch at the door. There were calls for brandy, hurried, frightened footfalls to and fro along the passages and wild jerkings at the telephone.

Denis had sprung with Nick to his friend's side and the shock of Heriot's weight nearly bore him to the ground. Between them they got him into a chair and Nick hung, agonized, over his grey silence. But after a moment or so, Heriot pulled himself together. He looked from one face to the other with a look half-frowning, half-puzzled Then his eyes rested on his daughter, his glance cleared and he put his hand on her's as if in reassurance.

"Nicole," he said, "my dear child—" His voice ceased. He fell into a heap over the arm of his chair.

CHAPTER XXXV

"Lampes qui s'éteignent, espoirs qui s'allument.

Aurore.

Lampes qui s'allument, espoirs qui s'éteignent.

Nuit."

Surely that oblong was his window looking out above the Silverwater? Why was it altered into such a strange shape? Where was the bureau standing next it—and this, this was not his bed?

Denis stirred, struggled, woke—woke, for the first time in his happy life, to that oppressive consciousness of sorrow which falls upon the spirit like a new and darker night. He sat up. Oh that suffocated anguish of waking in the dawn—who has not felt it? Who can ever forget it and its helplessness—? The couch on which he had been lying faced a narrow window, pointed into a Gothic arch, and set in the heavy curve of a tower wall. Greyness came through the slit and two more like it, greyness that was not yet light but merely the promise thereof, defining the deeper shadow within. A small antechamber, panelled in oak, unfamiliar and exotic, surrounded Denis, and in one wall the door stood open, admitting a significant, yellow gleam.

The American looked about him and everything cleared in his memory. How he had offered to take his turn with the others, so that Marrindon and poor

old Clayton might take a little rest—yes, he remembered.

Going across to the window, Denis opened the casement and leaned out, breathing gratefully of the damp, morning air. Far below the tower, the bushes were lumps of indefinite shadow, but the sky beyond was translucent with the steely gleam which precedes sunrise. A bird in the ivy above him twittered a drowsy note or two and fell silent. He drew a long, fresh breath and then turning, crossed the room with the purposeful step of one on guard, to an open door whence came the yellow light. He stood there on the threshold for a moment looking in and his face was very strained and tired.

There opened before him the audience-chamber of Whins—a noble room, where Scottish kings in succession had sat to receive homage and bestow favor. It was large and lofty with huge beams crossing overhead, making a network of shadows interlaced. The windows were closed, heavy hangings drawn across them, while a great carved bed had been placed in the centre of the floor. On this bed a tall man was lying, dressed as a Highland Chieftain in full panoply and color. His tranquil and handsome face was revealed by the light of many wax tapers which stood in a row on either side of the bier. The figure, the stillness, the lights, all had an immense dignity.

Traquair advanced in the room and stood beside his friend. Swayed by the draught of his movement, the candle flames wavered, bent and recovered as though in salutation. Outside, the blue was coming, the birds were awaking and asking one another their small joyous questions concerning the new day. Dawn was beginning, but here it would not enter—here the can-

dles would remain in possession. Pain and bewilderment at this realization filled the young man as he stood.

Heriot had lived five days. The blow, injuring a heart already weakened, brought on a first collapse from which he rallied. There had been two hopeful days; then a second attack. In all his life Denis had never spent such a week. No question of his leaving with the rest of the house-party; his affection had given him a right quickly recognized and relied on. All the world waited for the news from Whins; all the world wrote, called, cabled, telegraphed, telephoned, sent deputations, messages, flowers, equerries. Denis could not be spared. He had stayed on to help Mar-rindon, to run errands, to answer questions, to see visitors, to do the bidding of doctors and nurses. He had stayed that Nick, who clung to him in the desperation of her anxiety, might be quieted in his arms. He couldn't leave her then, with everything to face, with nobody to turn to.

A faint, strange sound began to reach Denis through the window, rising and falling against his tired nerves. He knew what it was; the pipers were practising their dirge for the funeral.

At all events, the future could not keep them apart, Nick and he. His thoughts flew to her now and enveloped her sorrow with passionate tenderness. He it was and not her father, who was to give her the home she longed for; nor was there any element left to separate them. Denis had been glad when Mr. Mar-rindon, with significant raised eyebrows, showed him the new Will lying unsigned in the desk. Heriot had been Heriot to the end. The old will, they both knew, left the illegitimate daughter only the Silverwater

property and a small income. Denis had been well satisfied that this income was not more than he had a right to expect from his own earnings in a year or two. Their home would be beside the Silverwater and he knew that she was now as glad of that as he could be.

All these things, in view of the girl's helpless position in the eyes of the law, Denis had talked over with the solicitor and the kind, distressed old vicar, who had journeyed up at once from Trampen Park. It had been plain to see that both of them were enormously relieved to have the girl's future thus provided for—, that without Denis, she would have been regarded as little more to be considered than Heriot's favorite dog. With what a glow, he touched again the folded cablegram lying in his pocket and recalled its warm, its comforting message. "Marry quickly as possible and bring Nick home. Your mother and the office will do the rest. Our love to both."

Yes, her welcome was awaiting her there and oh, poor child, she needed welcome!

Stronger, more poignant grew the distant dirge and Denis's throat tightened. Great wonder overcame him when he thought of the last strange months and of the part he had played in the drama of Heriot and his child. Death is ever the summons to recapitulation and when Denis had reviewed these incidents, they led his mind to solemn and tremendous conclusions. How terribly life, whenever one saw an entire piece of it, shook one's faith in the future! What a slave was the human spirit, shackled with biological tyranny, helpless in its march forward to an unknown destination! Only the interpretations of life's facts, not the facts themselves could be changed. Just as within the

pagan shrines set in clefts and caves,—ancient temples of forgotten gods,—are found today the Christian altars with their lamps burning—so it is the touching human habit to set up the altars of new explanations and beliefs in the shrine of our primitive instincts, and thus strive to justify and to re-consecrate them. Pathetic and vivifying impulse, his heart with awe acknowledged it.

Through the casement he had opened in the ante-chamber, a dawn wind began to blow, fresh and disturbing, and once more the guardian-candles bent and pointed at the dead. The watcher hastened to close the casement. On the floor lay the first sunbeam and the sight of that homely miracle brought the old nickname before him. The rising sun . . . Suddenly Denis clung to the window-sill, as grief swept over him and his eyes filled for the loss of his friend. That he could not praise St. Helios without reservation made his love more rather than less—as is often the way. The man in there had been passionate, vital, talented and radiant. There was no one left like him to color life with romance, for such a romantic as poor Denis knew himself to be.

Why were we all so sure life was better than it had been? Denis looked back upon the world of Heriot's youth, and saw it shining in radiance because it had produced Heriot. If the 20th century looked back to cry, "How mistaken!" the 19th might well have looked forward to retort, "How uninteresting!" To be something, to be somebody, to be worth the difference—these seemed to him at this instant, the only things in life. Personality, in his mind, had a value apart from virtue. Maybe one wouldn't always feel so; there would come austerer moments, when one would

criticize as well as cherish, when one would remember the price so often paid for beauty, for color, for loveableness. Had not poor Nick been swept to the very edge of tragedy?

Thus Denis sat in judgment upon Yesterday—and yet! There was Heriot lying in the delicate glare of the candles, and soon they would be saying old words over him and his men would carry him on their shoulders down the hill to that savage and moving music, while all that was remembered of Yesterday was that they loved him. And who loves Today?

Now the sun was risen, the dawn accomplished. Soon Nick would be opening her eyes and he knew, with content, what vision lay behind her tears. Not many days and they would be together and their thoughts would be filled with life, not death. Not many days . . . But this last dawn, Denis felt, must be dedicated to another than Nick, though not divided from her. There was the sound of a door opening within the house. The American heard once more the intolerable wailing of the bagpipes and turned, from the beauty of the sky without, back to the room where Heriot lay, splendid and at rest, on his bed.

THE END

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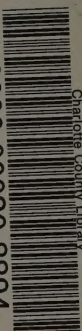
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